आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K M MUNSHI

R R DIWAKAR

157

RAMDAS SPEAKS

Volume I

BY

SWAMI RAMDAS



Swami Ramdas speaks to the gathering at Mr Jean Herbert's residence, Geneva

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

RAMDAS SPEAKS

VOLUME I

SWAMI RAMDAS



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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs 1 75 *

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages · Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes requires ample funds and an all-India organisation The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the re-integration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour

Let me make our goal more explicit

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities, we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order, we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him

The world, we feel, is too much with us Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included

* Since raised to Rs 2 50

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari, the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H V Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata* "What is not in it, is nowhere" After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul, he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic, it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine, it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival, but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi,
3rd October, 1951

K M MUNSHI

FOREWORD

All the speeches and talks given by Swami Ramdas, including answers to questions, during his World Tour which began on 3rd August 1954 and ended on 2nd January 1955, were first published by Anandashram in ten volumes. As a matter of convenience, the original Volumes 1 and 2 are together published now as this volume.

The object with which the tour was undertaken is given in the address he delivered in Bombay on the eve of his departure to Europe. This is published as Publishers' Note in this volume. The circumstances in which the tour was conceived and conducted have been described by Swamiji in his book "World is God" which he wrote after his return to the Ashram. The publication of these volumes has been made possible by the indefatigable labours of Swami Satchidananda who accompanied Swami Ramdas and took copious shorthand notes of the talks and speeches in the various places. Due to unavoidable reasons he was not able to attend some of the talks which, therefore, it has not been possible to include in these volumes.

For the story of Swami Ramdas' life before renunciation, the reader is referred to the book, "Passage to Divinity" by Chandrashekhar. Swamiji's own autobiographical volumes "In Quest of God" and "In the Vision of God" narrate his spiritual struggles and experiences as well as an account of the founding of the Anandashram to spread the Message of Universal Love and Service.

—ANANDASHRAM

Anandashram P.O.,
District Cannanore,
Kerala, South India

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Speech delivered on 15th August 1954 by Swami Ramdas at "Ivorine", the residence of Sri Natverlal G Parikh, Bombay, on the eve of departure to Europe

It was thirty years ago that Ramdas was first taken up by God and made to do everything as He willed From that time onwards, Ramdas has been going round India, propagating the message of love and peace to all people who come in contact with him But now it is His will that Ramdas should go outside India and move about in the world so that he can meet more of His manifestations in order that he may see in them also the same Beloved One he sees here, and has been seeing all along during his tours in different parts of India

Now, the object of his going to foreign countries, as willed by the Divine — Ramdas uses the word 'foreign' as it is a common usage, but in fact there is nothing foreign to him as the whole world is his home — is to propagate the ideal of Universal Love and Service Ramdas can spread this message only in one way, and that is by beholding his Beloved in all, so that his love may flow out and inundate the entire world, removing all man-made distinctions and enabling us all to stand united as one world family It is one Truth that pervades everywhere and all humanity is the expression of that Truth Ramdas is going abroad to show all how it is possible to achieve this exalted experience Every one must realise that the Divine is within him

The trouble today is due to the fact that the world has forgotten the Divine dwelling within every one of us, — the Divine who is all-pervading The Divine is called the Atman — the all-pervading Reality Hence we must lay emphasis on that aspect of our life which is all-pervading Then it is that we shall attain real inner freedom and peace and, thereby, real outer harmony in the world People of the West as well as the East are now immersed in things superficial and they do not care to dive deep It is ignorance on the surface and wisdom deep down "Straws on the surface flow, for pearls you should dive below" That precious pearl is within you and the characteristic of that pearl is pure bliss and peace The more we attune

ourselves to the immortal and changeless Spirit within us, the more we become happy We all know by experience that we do not get happiness by clinging to external things The immortal Spirit which is all bliss and peace can alone grant us true freedom

Ramdas is going abroad to preach this Truth The authority for Ramdas to do so is God's will He goes there not as a big Swami, but as a humble child First, Ramdas will tell them that he sees them all as manifestations of his Beloved and he will mingle with them quite freely All human beings in the world are forms of his Beloved In that spirit Ramdas will move among them They will understand that this child has come to them from the East fully surcharged with the message of the ancient Sages and Saints in order to make all of them understand what India stands for, and then enliven their hearts with the consciousness of their immortal nature and make them love each other so that peace and harmony may prevail all over the world There will be no room then for strife, disorder and war that bring devastation and disaster to humanity

People say that another war is likely to break out, but Ramdas feels no such thing will happen By the power of God, worked through His prepared instruments, the tide of war will be stemmed and ultimately the war mentality in the world will disappear Every one in the West is stricken with fear of an approaching war A war of nerves is going on This fear has seized them and they are trembling But God's power is supreme and that power will work for changing this war mentality and bringing about a state of harmony and peace on earth

Bearing this humble message Ramdas is going to visit the various countries in the West and the East, with the good wishes of you all Before he finally decided to go abroad, he wrote to all the great Saints of India and he has received their gracious blessings What more does he want, now that he is fully armed with their benedictions and encouraging words? Ramdas is going like a child, as willed by his Divine Master

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SWITZERLAND AND FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA, 21st August 1954
Place Residence of Mr Jean Herbert, 'Hadeyah', Vandouvres

PRAY FOR HIS GRACE

Ramdas (To some devotees who entered the room) Sit down, please! You might find it difficult to sit on the floor in that posture We have come here from a long distance to talk to you about God Do you all understand English?

Questioner My friend does not know English I have read your book "In Quest of God" I understand English This lady wants to know if she could ask a question

Ramdas Yes

Q How to achieve all that you have mentioned in that book?

Ramdas The simple answer is that it all happened by God's grace It is God's grace that came to him and transformed him That alone produced the miracle Our effort is useless His grace must come to us Then, things happen as they should happen, for our uplift and for our ultimate illumination and realisation It is not due to our merit We can turn our mind towards God only if and when He wills

We must contact His devotees and saints That will quicken our aspiration for Him So it is emphasised that the primary thing needed for an aspirant is the contact of a God-realised soul Grace can flow to us through saints What we have to do is only to pray for His grace That is all we can do, and the rest must be done for us by God Even the prayer we offer is because He makes us pray, but we do not know this at first Later on we come to know that we do everything, even praying, by His grace Otherwise, we have no thoughts or words to pray The devotee says, "O God! You have put the words on my tongue for this prayer"

EGO IS THE DANGER

Q There is high and low As we are human, we have ups and downs

Ramdas It is true at first one's progress is not always steady We are in contact with Him for some time and then we lose the contact This is inevitable in the early struggle We

cannot constantly keep our mind in tune with God Sometimes there are breaks and separations, causing pain and agony During prayer and meditation our mind is drawn inward; at other times it is restless When the mind is not still we feel miserable We must then pray to Him that we may stay our mind on Him Even when we are working or doing anything, our mind can be with Him This constant dwelling on Him is Self-illumination or Self-realisation This is God experience God is not far away from us He is within us We now have the world too much with us The ego is a great obstacle It must be surrendered to God so that He may take possession of us and grant us pure peace and joy Sometimes the ego does not yield it is obstinate

Q When we are very eager to destroy the ego, is it not a danger in itself?

Ramdas It is no danger at all For, by surrendering our ego to God, we only become His children and attain full freedom In this there is no danger On the other hand, to have the ego is dangerous There is danger in not having Him Until we surrender ourselves to Him we are in a state of peril. As we shall be subject to many fears and anxieties So the best thing is to hand our life over to Him When we are under His protection we are fearless It is just like a child being under the care of its mother So, when we are conscious of God, we are protected we feel secure There is an oft-quoted Sloka in the Bhagavad Gita the great scripture of the Hindus wherein Lord Krishna says —

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मा ये जना पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्ताना योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

"To those who worship Me alone thinking of no other, to such devotees who are ever united with Me in contemplation, I bring full security, fulfilling all their wants and taking care of them"

So, those who take refuge in God are ever fearless There is for them a sense of security — both spiritual and physical This is absolutely true, there is no doubt about it Ramdas can bear out this truth from his own experience God took him up and made him His own thirty-three years ago From that time onwards he has been experiencing wonderful protection and security in all circumstances and situations Whenever there were difficulties, God made him face them as meant for his own

good and the result was that he found they were no difficulties at all We should not ask God to remove our difficulties, but only pray to Him to enable us to see His will in them, in all our trials and hardships God is all love and kindness and He means no ill He is also the sole doer If we have this faith, and surrender, we can remain happy and cheerful in all conditions Good and bad are according to our mental attitude Nothing is, by itself good or bad Everything happens for the best What is good for us at one time is not good for us at another, what is good for one is not good for another So we have no real standard for good and bad, applicable in all cases, conditions and situations in our life They change as our mind changes What appears to be an ideal thing now is not so after some time, because the mind has changed So happiness and misery are our own creations, based on our mental attitude towards events If we transcend this relative plane, all states will be good for us

Therefore, the best way for us is to dwell in the Divine, in that highest consciousness which we can develop by constant practice of self-surrender Self-surrender is the way We should feel and say "I am nothing, O God, it is You who make me talk, walk and do all things Verily, it is by Your power this body, mind and senses are active" It is now that our life becomes blissful and our actions spontaneous There will then be in us no lust, greed or wrath Our life will be thoroughly purified and illumined with divine light This is the aim of human life Life is not intended to be lived in subjection to our lower nature, but to be raised and transformed into an expression of divine power and joy

SAINTS ARE BEACONS

Q In case I have attained some degree of realisation and seen some light, is it presumptuous on my part to make others share it?

Ramdas We become light to others in the sense that light gives out radiance spontaneously, not with the consciousness that it does so By its innate nature, our being is self-luminous and it cannot but shine It is in this manner saints are beacons who direct the aspirants Godward They are, again, like the sun that shines on all equally

Q The sun has always been the sun But man is conscious that he started from the lower rung of the ladder

Ramdas A man who has become the expression of light feels only as if a cover has been removed from him You put a cover on a light, the light does not shine outside the cover When the cover is removed, there is light for all So you become a light unto yourself and at the same time a light unto others.

Q: What about those who close their eyes to you?

Ramdas: It is their look-out Unless they open their eyes they cannot see the light

EVERYTHING IS BRAHMAN

Q If man experiences God in such a way that his ego dissolves in God, there is no longer any request or application for anything, because there is no one to ask or give

Ramdas That is the state we have to realise complete oneness and identity with God Then God is for us inside, outside and everywhere The whole world we see as the expression of God Ramdas can tell you he is talking to God Himself, because you are all forms of God It is He who makes Ramdas talk and it is He who listens to the talk It is all a wonderful play of God that He should reveal Himself in innumerable forms for Him to talk to, to hear, to love and be loved There is an Upanishadic expression सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म, which means "Verily, all this universe is Brahman" It is perfectly true

Q Even the unreal?

Ramdas Which unreal?

Q As in the prayer, "Lead me from the unreal to the Real from darkness to Light "

Ramdas Unreal and darkness mean the same Darkness is when we see diversity, which is false What is false has no real existence "Lead me from the darkness of diversity to that light in which I see everything as God" — that is the meaning of the prayer

DIVINE LILA

Q Is this divine Lila not a play of God, in which God loses Himself so as to feel delight and for His own Ananda assumes various names and forms?

Ramdas God Himself has assumed all names and forms in this world-play in which He pretends to be not conscious of Himself You know, a player on the stage pretends to be something different from what he is Similarly He is playing the

universal game, putting on various masks and posing that He is not what He is. We are all He. Let us not forget this truth. From duality you reach non-duality. Ramdas here tells you his own experience.

Ramdas started as a servant of God and remembered Him constantly by chanting Ramnam. Through such remembrance all the impurities of his mind were washed away and he experienced that he and God were one. All duality disappeared. There was nothing and none else but He. Everything was He. This vision came to Ramdas when he was in a cave. For all the twenty-four hours he was remembering God and praying to Him. One fine morning, after twenty days in the cave, he came out and saw the light of God everywhere. He was in an ecstasy. For him, everything was the manifestation of his Beloved. He could see no duality. From that time onwards, Ramdas has been immersed in eternal joy and it is still with him.

RAMCHARANDAS

Q. What became of Ramcharandas?

Ramdas: He was lost in the Himalayas, he never returned. It was twenty-five years ago that Ramdas last heard from him. He wrote from Rishikesh to say that he was starting on a pilgrimage to Badrinath and other places. After that Ramdas has not heard anything about him. Now Ramdas acquaints you with the talk Ramcharandas had with Ramdas before they separated in Kashmir. He asked Ramdas what he should do. Ramdas told him: "You should remain in Kashmir and go on with your spiritual practices." "When shall I see you again?" he asked. "You should see Ramdas only after you have realised God — after you are fully illumined with the light of God. But, then there is this dilemma. If you realise God, you will not come to see Ramdas. Before realisation too, you cannot come to see him," Ramdas replied. Either way, he would not come to Ramdas.

Ramcharandas was a wonderful character. He was very kind and loving to Ramdas. He looked after Ramdas with motherly care and affection. Ramdas was wandering without caring at all for his body. He was God-mad. God's name was always on his tongue. He never felt any concern as to who was taking him, and where he was taken to. If anybody gave him food he would eat, otherwise not. At that time this young

man followed Ramdas, prepared food and fed him He used to give Ramdas even bath Once Ramdas jokingly remarked that he was rubbing Ramdas' body hard as a groom washes a horse And we had a hearty laugh Ramcharandas was fearless to a degree and was ever ready to face any danger Ramdas once asked him to go and stay in a cave on the top of a hill in the midst of a forest frequented by tigers When Ramdas asked him if he would not be afraid, his reply was, "Why should I be afraid when I am under your protection? You have asked me to go and sit in yonder cave So there cannot be any reason for fear" Such faith and confidence was his! On occasions, he used to exercise authority over Ramdas, just as a mother does over her child Ramdas was often obedient to him Whenever he was a little too exacting, Ramdas used to say to him, "You are like Hriday to Sri Ramakrishna" At this he would smile He had such love for Ramdas!

Q Won't you know when Ramcharandas would reach illumination, even if you do not see him?

Ramdas From the very start there was something like an understanding with Ram that Ramdas should not bother Him about the future So many ask Ramdas about their future He only tells them that God has enjoined on him not to ask Him about it If you wish to be His child you have to be free from all thoughts of the future Do not ask Him what is to happen Everything happens for the best Then, where is the point of asking Him about the future? If Ramdas had been worrying about this and that person as to what would happen to them, he would have been care-worn and wretched His only task is to radiate joy wherever he goes and make everyone remember God So, he does not care to know what lies in the future If anybody comes with some troubles, Ramdas says, "It is all for your good, they lead you to God"

DIVINE PRESENCE IS SECURITY

Q If there is no worry about the future, there is no need to feel secure also Is it not?

Ramdas The sense of security is a state of consciousness of spontaneous feeling, not merely an intellectual acceptance It is like the state of a child, secure and blissful in the presence of the mother The child does not deliberate or think in that way, but automatically has a consciousness of it So also, in the presence

of the Divine Mother, Ramdas feels secure and blissful, as he lives, moves and has his whole being in Her The divine Presence is so real to him In that Presence even wild beasts become tame Serpents came to him but did no harm to him in any way He freely moved about in forests and yet never did a wild animal attack him God's presence was felt everywhere by him, and so the wild animals that came to him became tame and harmless

You are afraid only because you see another, and feel you are different from him This is due to your sense of duality, which is the cause of fear, dislike, hate and other evils and therefore of misery and bondage When you feel one with all lives, it is all joy to you Where is fear then? In the thick forests of the Himalayas, the saints who live there make fire to keep away cold and sit round it in meditation Wild beasts of the forest also come and join them, but do no harm They all sit together like friends So long as these animals are in the company of saints, they do not even fight with one another, or harm the saints, for there is in the latter no sense of separateness

SELF AND GOD ARE ONE

Q How to reach that state?

Ramdas When our life is pure and attuned to nature — the expression of God — there is in us no fear or hate Thus, by continuous awareness of our real life and being, we realise that we are one with God, the all-pervading eternal Spirit Let us remember who we are We have forgotten our true Self, which is God *Tat Twam Asi* — 'That thou art,' says the Veda So let us think of God, meditate on Him and be awakened to the consciousness of Him We will then transcend the body-idea which is the cause of all ignorance and misery Self and God are one We must accept this as the central truth We can see Him provided we are sufficiently pure "Blessed are the pure in heart, because they shall see God" By remembrance of God alone can we purify our minds Darkness can be removed only by light There is no other way By constant thought of purity, our hearts become pure God is all purity Constant remembrance of Him will free us from lust, greed and wrath Then the light which is already within us will shine out and permeate our whole being

THE INNER LIGHT

This is the inner light in everyone of us. "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Your own self is Brahman. That is the essence of Vedanta. God is not far away. He is nearer to us than our very breath, for He pervades everywhere. If you only meditate on Him, and surrender yourself to Him, you will realise your oneness with Him and know that you and He are one. He is not like the light of the fire, sun or star. He is the Light of lights — the Eternal Light — the source of all mundane lights.

We must be like innocent children. See how pure and free they are! They have no dislike or hate, they see everybody alike. If we attain the innocence of a child God is ours. Nay, we become then the very embodiment of God.

DON'T DEPEND ON WEALTH FOR HAPPINESS

Before this achievement, name, fame, wealth and position in the world are nothing. What can these give you? — a multitude of fears and cares. There is a saying, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." The high position is there, but no peace. We try to acquire so many things of the world, but find no peace in them. The source of all happiness is within us. We have only to find out, know and realise it.

Here is an illustration. A man has in his pocket, say, a thousand pounds. He forgets all about it and goes abegging, saying he is poor and helpless. The moment he becomes aware of the money in his pocket, how happy he feels! We have infinite joy within us, but we have forgotten about it. We go here and there in search of it. Perishable objects can give us only perishable happiness. The immortal alone can give us everlasting joy. Men of riches and position are still unhappy. They come to Ramdas and ask him how he is happy always. They say they are millionaires, live in palatial bungalows and have many servants and motor cars. Yet, they are unhappy. Ramdas possesses no riches, and yet he is overflowing with joy. What is the secret? If you also realise God within you, you will get the same joy.

It does not mean that you should not acquire wealth, but you should not depend upon it for your happiness. You may have wealth which you can use for the welfare of others who need it. Wealth alone can never make you happy. Happiness is within. Be active. Work as a servant of God so that you may be useful

to your fellow-beings in distress God gives you wealth so that you may help the poor Selfless action is its own reward Suppose a hungry man comes to you and you feed him How happy it makes you! Service is worship Worship does not mean simply sitting in one place and praying Whatever act you do is worship, when it is done with the thought of God

EXAMPLE OF INDIAN KINGS

God-vision or God-realisation is something like an intoxicant You are inebriated with the love of God You live then not in a world of diversity, but in a world of oneness You do not see darkness anywhere You see everything as He—the same one light, the same one power manifest in all beings and creatures You enjoy a "peace that passeth understanding" Your entire being becomes pure and holy It is not the purity of a mental conception, but the purity of the Absolute It is a wonderful state before which you take all your other achievements as trash, as of no importance

There were Kings in India who gave up their throne and sacrificed everything they had for attaining this supreme state Having reached it, they went about preaching that the goal of human life was to realise absolute peace and bliss and that renunciation was the way You know, animals cannot attain this blessedness as they are not gifted with the power to reason, feel and act as human beings can do Therefore it is said that human life is intended only to be lived for realising God You can make yourself perfectly happy and free, and be independent of everything external, by going within yourself, by drawing your vision inward and finding God there You have not to spend anything for it, nor toil hard for it You have only to take your mind inward by stilling it When the ego is destroyed by self-surrender, the mind becomes still, and in the still mind God reveals Himself

Q The difficulty for us is to subdue the mind

Ramdas It is no doubt difficult, but nothing is difficult for God, if we leave it to Him When we think we can do anything of ourselves, we fail If we allow God to do things for us, it becomes so easy We neither control the mind ourselves, nor let Him do this for us He says, "O child, give your mind over to Me, I will take care of you" We don't do this

HOW TO REALISE UNITY

Q The great difficulty for us is to realise that there is no duality Our habits and beliefs make us feel that there is duality or separation between us and the outer world But, from the teachings of Indian saints we can understand there is no duality We do not however realise it

Ramdas: That is why we must meditate on God, think of Him constantly God stands for unity, harmony and oneness When we make God our very own, we realise unity in diversity, and so we will have harmony within and harmony without We will then create a tranquil atmosphere around us, and then there will be no strife, conflict or war That is why we must turn our mind to that Spirit within us which stands for unity and harmony By the power of even one man's prayer, a house gets permeated with an atmosphere of harmony and love If everybody prays, how peaceful will life be in such a house! In the house of a devotee, purity and holiness reign supreme The moment you enter it, you will experience a strange joy, for you behold every face lit up with cheer and brightness

It is in our own hands to be happy or otherwise If everyone becomes joyful by realising God within him, what a wonderful world it will be! God's light and peace you get will not be only for yourself but for others also You can share them with others and contribute towards the establishment of world peace and harmony When we think of God, we should know that we are thinking of our real Self — the universal all-pervading Self By a continuous thought we become aware of the Self which is God So, to remember Him means to remember our Self Or conversely, to remember our real Self is to remember Him He and we are not different We feel separate from Him, and so we are unhappy The more we expand our life, the happier we become The universal life is God, and our life must merge in that Life, just like a drop in the ocean For this, our mind should become still Stillness of the mind means experience of the Universal Truth The restless mind gives rise to individuality When we are one with the universal Truth or Spirit we know we are unborn and undying, and that birth and death are only for the body, not for the soul which is one with God Hence the prayer, "Lead me from death to Immortality!"

THE "I" IS LOST

Ramdas It is very kind of you all to have taken so much trouble to come here to see Ramdas — this child of God God is taking him from place to place so that he may talk to all about Him All of you love Him, otherwise you would not have come to Ramdas

You might be surprised to hear Ramdas speaking in the third person Don't you find it strange? Even in India so many are surprised as rarely people talk that way. One morning, many years ago, Ramdas found that he had lost the 'I' Some friends in India, at the time of Ramdas' starting on his tour, suggested that he should not speak to the people of Europe, America and other countries in the third person, as they might not understand Ramdas, and that he should use the pronoun 'I' Ramdas' reply was, "When 'I' does not come to him, what can he do?"

THE MOST SUITABLE PATH

Q Sri Ramakrishna has said that repetition of God's name is the best path for this Yuga or age Is it good only for this Yuga and not for the other Yugas?

Ramdas In other Yugas, there were other methods of approach such as Tapasya, Yajna, worship and so on But in the present Yuga, chanting of God's name is the best means to realise God and in fact it is the easiest In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord says, यज्ञाना जपयज्ञोऽस्मि । "Of all the Yajnas, I am the Japa Yajna"

Japa Yajna means realising God through the chanting of His name Chanting of the Name must not be mechanical Many people mechanically repeat the Name and do not get any benefit. The mind must be attuned to the Name and God — which are one — when you chant it When you take the Name with all love and devotion, it tastes sweeter than nectar, because by doing so, you bring out the hidden joy from within you The very moment you start repeating the Name, you experience ineffable ecstasy In fact, Name is not a means to an end, but an end in itself If you put a lozenge in your mouth, you do not take long to get the sweetness of it So also, as soon as you take the divine Name, you feel the joy of it

There are so many people who repeat the Name, who say that they do not derive any benefit or joy from it If you really love

God above everything else, His name would give you joy instantly Any object that you love with all your heart gives you joy, by the mere thought of it For example, a mother loves her child, and so the name of the child is very sweet to her This is the experience of every mother You have a friend whom you love The very name of that friend gives you joy Similarly, when you give your entire heart to God and take His name, it must taste very sweet to you When Ramdas was chanting the Name, he used to be intoxicated with joy His ears were drinking the nectar of the Name with all avidity Any sound other than that of the name of God did not attract his ears

REPETITION SILENT AND VOCAL

Q Is it better to repeat it aloud or silently?

Ramdas Each way has its own benefit Mental or silent repetition of the Name is considered to be better than verbal repetition When you mentally repeat, your mind is fixed in the Name, whereas mere oral repetition does not effectively stop the wandering mind But, if your mind is harmonised with the sound of the Name, oral repetition is better Ramdas repeated the Name aloud and the sound used to arrest his mind and keep it fixed on God, bringing about union with Him The oral repetition changed into mental repetition, for the mind took up the refrain until at last it became still The repeater, repetition and the repeated became one Thereafter, the repetition ceased just as in a journey, when you reach the destination, there is no more need for you to walk farther on Ramdas can tell you in all truth and sincerity that there is no Sadhana easier than the repetition of the Name It can take you to the highest spiritual eminence by giving you the all-comprehensive knowledge of God Sri Ramakrishna had gone through various Sadhanas for twelve years Ultimately, whenever anybody went to him for spiritual advice, he would ask them to take only the name of God This is the essence of all Sadhanas

Q I find I can easily repeat something mentally and also think of something else at the same time

Ramdas That is why we are told to repeat the name of God putting into it all our soul, and not with a divided mind Repeating the Name with a wandering mind shows that our love for God is not integral Some people come to Ramdas and complain that they repeat the Name by the lips, but their mind is

wandering Now, why can one not concentrate one's mind on God, when one is chanting His name, or when one sits for meditation? The reason is that one's love for the objects of the world is greater than one's love for God Where one's love is, there one's mind is If one has whole-hearted love for God, one's mind will automatically go to Him, just as a miser's mind goes to his money

Surely the aspirant's mind must think of God as intensely as a miser thinks of his money, if not more If he loves something else in the world more than God, naturally, his mind will stay on that something So a sincere devotee prays to God, "O God, make me love Thee above everything else" When we love Him, our whole mind will be filled with Him and there can be no other thought coming into it

Ramdas will give you an instance here of such a God-love You must have heard the story of the famous saint Mira Bai She was, against her will, married to a prince, but her heart was already given away to God before her marriage When Mira was a child, a marriage procession was passing in the street Mira and her mother were witnessing it Jokingly her mother asked Mira whom she was going to marry She said she would marry Lord Krishna From that time Mira was feeling that she was actually married to Lord Krishna and when the proposal came for her marriage with the prince, she said that she was already married to Krishna Though she was forced to marry the prince, she could not love him One day, her husband asked her whether she did not love him at all She replied that her entire heart was given to Lord Krishna and there was no possibility of her loving another

So, if one wants God, one's whole heart must be given to Him The one sole objective of the devotee is to pray to Him, to take His name and to dedicate his whole life to His service

WHAT IS YOGA ?

Q Can we hear something about Yoga ?

Ramdas Yoga means union with God A total dedication of all your actions to Him is called Karma Yoga To realise Him by offering all your love and devotion to Him is Bhakti Yoga To realise your oneness with the absolute Truth through *Vichara* or discrimination between the Real and the unreal, is Jnana Yoga Of these Yogas, Bhakti Yoga is the easiest, because to

love is in your very nature. From childhood onwards, you normally love your mother, brother, husband or wife, children and so on. So love is innate to your nature. You need not take pains to cultivate it. Only, you have to turn it from the world to God, from your relations to that Supreme Being. Here there is nothing new to be acquired. You must have heard of the great devotee Prahlada. He prayed to God:

या प्रीतिरविवेकानां विषयेष्वनपायिनी ।
त्वामनुस्मरतः सा मे हृदयान्माऽपसर्पतु ॥

"May I think of Thee with that strong love which the ignorant cherish for the things of the world, and may that love never cease to abide in my heart!"

It is easy to elevate and purify the mind so that we may, through devotion to God, attune our being to Him. Jnana or Self-awareness leads a man to realise that he is not the mind, body and senses, but the great Reality which is beyond all these — the changeless, formless, and nameless Truth. This is indeed a difficult path. Renunciation of the externals seems to be essential for one to realise God by following this path. But by devotion you can have Him, though living in the world. You love God and behold Him in all beings. Then you need not have to reject or renounce anything.

There is yet another Yoga, which is known as Raja Yoga. There are eight rules to be observed in this Yoga. Important among them are Asana and Pranayama — a suitable posture and the practice of breath control. This Yoga brings on unnecessary strain. It can to a certain degree stabilize the mind, but it does not help one in attaining perfect purity. But, the path of love and devotion is smooth and easy. You are blissful from the very start.

So of all the Yogas, Bhakti is said to be the easiest and most natural. It can be adopted by anybody, whatever his condition may be, whether he is young or old, to whatever caste, creed and class he might belong. Taking God's name is the one Sadhana which increases your love and devotion for God, and the Name is a sure way of contacting Him and maintaining a steady stream of His remembrance. To take the name of God is possible for everybody. There is no necessity of any particular posture or external renunciation. You can at all times fill your mind with the sole thought of God, and get completely

absorbed in Him through whole-hearted love for Him This is indeed the best path

Further, it is not enough to know God You must also enjoy Him Suppose you have some sweets in your pocket Mere knowledge of the sweets does not satisfy you You have to eat and enjoy them God is within you And, you have to bring Him out, as it were, in your manifest life and experience Him This is done through devotion Knowing is one thing and experiencing is another So, mere knowledge by itself is not enough Jnana must ripen into Vijnana or actual experience of the Truth Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa lays emphasis on devotion that comes after the attainment of Jnana

Q It is said of Sri Sarada Devi that in her later life she not only used to give the Name to everybody who asked for it but even sent for people who did not ask for it and gave them the same

Ramdas That shows how compassionate she was She was anxious that everyone should remember God by repeating His name She must have come to know that the person whom she voluntarily initiated must have had some mental trouble or suffering which she sought to alleviate out of compassion for him Truly, the effect of repetition of the Mantra is complete freedom from fear and anxiety, and attainment of inner peace and joy

GANDHIJI'S ASSASSINATION

Q Gandhiji, a great saint, was assassinated What explanation can you give for this?

Ramdas Saints who have reached spiritual eminence can die at will, whenever they wish They are not subject to the ordinary laws of life and death, which govern people in general They can shuffle off the body any time they like. A few days previous to Gandhiji's death, he wished intensely that he should die He even expressed that he should prefer to be shot down He actually invited death Gandhiji was so deeply pained to see Hindus and Muslims killing each other out of hatred that the words 'I wish I were dead' inevitably issued out of his lips

In Africa a Pathan attacked him with a knife Gandhiji bore absolutely no ill-will towards that person On the other hand, he felt great love and sympathy for him, with the result the Pathan became his friend Now it was different Gandhiji deliberately desired to die A desire rising in the mind of such

a person cannot but be fulfilled This incident reveals the greatness of the saint rather than the enormity of the crime of the man who killed him

"MANY ARE CALLED, FEW ARE CHOSEN"

Q Is it not that we derive benefit and get blessings by the company of saints only so far as we are prepared for it, because illumination comes from within? Unless we are prepared, we cannot get anything from Him It is only from within ourselves that we can get anything, and nothing can come from outside There are many people in Geneva, but how few are attracted here!

Ramdas "Many are called, few are chosen" This is one way of looking at it But there are instances in the lives of saints where, by their mere contact, even criminals have suddenly become saints, while those who have been striving long for spiritual light do not seem to get anything Take the case of St Paul He was a persecutor of Jesus before he became the latter's disciple Those who were with Jesus much prior to him did not however benefit as much as St. Paul did In India there was a saint known as Valmiki, who was at one time a robber He used to waylay passers by, rob and kill them for maintaining himself and his family But by the contact and grace of a saint, he himself became a saint From the human view-point, it would appear that he never deserved to be blessed with this great change Indeed, the grace of a saint works mysteriously No explanation can be found why it is so Only we can say, "It is all the will of God" When He wants to free a soul from ignorance, He does it in an instant, whether that soul is fit or not If grace is subject to conditions, it cannot be all-powerful If it depends upon a man's qualification or fitness, it cannot be called grace

A devotee asks God, "Are you a trader? Are we to toil day and night for your grace? If so, can you call it grace? Would it not be a wage for our labour? God, I will not do anything to earn your grace Still, you should bless me with your grace Then alone, I can reckon you to be gracious Even the worst of men, you have saved Why not me?"

Ramdas was often asked what he did to deserve God's grace They thought it was all due only to Ramdas' severe austerities Ramdas said he did not do anything by his own individual will,

which is a myth God Himself in His mercy inspired him to perform all Sadhanas for realising Him Sheer grace alone changed him from what he was, to what he is Who are we mortals to qualify ourselves to deserve grace? If we do anything good or great, it is by His will and power We are absolutely nothing By His grace alone we can be saved, not by our merit or effort

GURU, GOD, WORLD AND YOU ARE ONE

Q There is a moment when the difference between the seer and the seen disappears

Ramdas There is such an experience as that Till we get it, we feel the sense of separation, we see duality We cannot imagine what that state is like We must have deep experience of it It is to be one with God This is achieved by the transcendence of the body-idea and the sublimation of the sense of duality

Q In that case, is it not true that anything and everything becomes one's Guru and there is nothing to learn from any one in particular?

Ramdas So long as duality exists, we have our likes and dislikes, success and failure, honour and dishonour, and so on These pairs of opposites seem to be very real to us If we transcend this notion, and remain unaffected by the impact of happiness and grief, and are ever fixed in inner harmony, unruffled by anything that happens to us, then only we have reached the Truth When we are subject to the condition of the passing moods of joy and grief, how can we say there is only one Truth and no duality? This state of Adwaita or non-duality is spoken of in the Bhagavad Gita as 'Brahmisthiti' or state of being established in Brahman, Cosmic Consciousness

Now you behold nothing but the Divine everywhere You may, for the sake of Lila or play, maintain a sense of separation and assume an individuality You may talk to and serve others, feeling all the time that you are one with them Your realisation of oneness is not affected by your activity on the plane of apparent duality In fact, for you, since you are identified with the universal life and consciousness, there is no division or separation This should not be a mere intellectual acceptance What is needed is actual experience Here, Guru and disciple are one, Guru, God, world and you are all one

REASON HAS A LIMIT

Q Does this duality not lead us to magnify our ego and project it as God? How can it be eradicated? Intellectually, we know non-duality is the Truth How can we remain not attached to the dualities? Is there any other means than the Japa to which you refer? After all, we have not only our western religious tradition, but also the whole culture and tradition behind us that makes us struggle by reasoning

Ramdas Reason can take us only to a certain limit. There it halts You know, there is a border-line between the material and the spiritual, between the intellectual and the spiritual Reason can take us up to that border and not beyond If you want to take a leap into the Infinite and realise your oneness with Him, your reason must cease to function Reason is a help, no doubt, but to some extent only After a stage, it becomes an obstruction It cannot grant you the experience you aim at Reason cannot therefore be a safe guide throughout your journey You must, at a certain stage, replace reason by what is called intuition Intuition is the outcome of the fusion of a purified heart and illumined intelligence Intuition is a spontaneous outflow of divine thought, feeling and action in and through us The chief condition to be fulfilled in order to reach this blessed state is elimination of the ego-sense How to do this? It is no doubt very hard It is not surely by intellectual endeavour, but by humbling yourselves before the Divine When you bring to your mind the greatness and glory of Him who is your immortal Self, by continuous remembrance, the ego gradually dwindles away and you stand revealed as He, — the Supreme One This is the way of approach You start from duality and reach non-duality Unless your mind is pure, that is, free from all desires, you cannot attain oneness with Him Mere saying you are He, won't do Genuine experience is necessary Remaining always on the dual plane, subject to the Dwandwas of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, profit and loss, and still saying 'I am Brahman' or 'I am one with the Divine' is self-deception

PREPARE TO TAKE THE FINAL LEAP

When Ramdas says that you should repeat the Name, he is asking you to repeat only the Name of your own real Self, which is God When you are asked who you are, you reply 'I am so

and so' Do you say 'I am God'? If you are bold enough truly to say so, from inner experience, then you are verily He As Sri Ramakrishna has said, the sense of duality disappears only in Nirvikalpa Samadhi When gaining this experience, your mind, intellect, senses and body are completely at a standstill You are then not at all conscious of your body and the outer world You can declare from the exalted experience that you are one with God, not till then Sri Ramakrishna was performing Puja in the temple by worshipping the image of his deity outside him But later on, by the grace of his Guru, he attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi, or absorption into the Divine When you are first entering into this non-dual divine consciousness, a certain amount of fear seizes you if you are unprepared Doing away with the ego-sense involves a great sacrifice, for which the soul is not usually prepared Hence the fear and hesitation, bordering sometimes on terror You know Sri Ramakrishna touched the chest of Swami Vivekananda The latter, when suddenly going into the state of Nirvikalpa, was alarmed and so he protested

So you have to prepare yourself gradually and take the final leap All Sadhanas are done with a view to still the mind The perfectly still mind is the Universal Spirit It is now that the ego dissolves and you realise that you are the Universal Spirit Stilling the mind is not easy It cannot be done at will You have to go through the necessary discipline for it Mind is like an ocean, with waves incessantly rising and falling At first, the aim is to make the mind still by concentrating on any one of God's symbols sound, name, image or light The God-idea must predominate in your mind But that idea also should be finally dissolved Now what becomes of your little 'I' what is your experience? You cannot express what it is It simply baffles description

There was a time when Ramdas had to contend against the mind The mind was trying to overpower him whenever he tried to control it, but as he went on chanting the Name, God came to his rescue Usually, man is a slave of the mind Whatever the mind prompts, indiscriminately man does So, what is needed is mastery over the mind The man who is guided by a passion-ridden mind lives in ignorance and suffers badly When you are about to do the right thing, the mind asks you not to do it

WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

What, after all, is right and what is wrong? That thought or action which takes you towards God is right, and that thought or action which takes you away from God is wrong You can find out for yourself whether you are progressing towards God, or going away from Him There is no thought of right and wrong after you have reached God, all thoughts cease and all duality is transcended Your life then flows spontaneously for the good of all You live and act in the divine consciousness The so-called sin has no significance for the saint who has realised God. He becomes totally pure and holy His entire life is an offering at the feet of God For him, there is only God And, God is all

GO BEYOND THE GUNAS

Q I wish to have your help and guidance I often get some spiritual experiences, that is, sometimes I am overflowing in my love for God and go into a state of ecstasy, when I see before me only a vast expanse of sand I feel this is the form of my Ishta, the Mother. I am a Mother-worshipper. This experience is of course very elevating, but there are hours when I feel I have absolutely no love for God and am at that time in a state of great agony Unfortunately, this depressed state comes rather too often

Ramdas The mind is under the influence of three Gunas,—Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa When a person is under the influence of Tamas, he is lazy and dull Rajas makes him restless, ambitious, very active and also gives him passions like anger and so on When he is under the influence of Sattwa Guna his mind becomes calm, serene, happy and he gets visions of the forms of God he worships, either as a particular form or as an expanse of light But these visions are not permanent They come and go, because they remain only so long as one is in Sattwa Guna, and it is not possible for one to be in Sattwa Guna for a long time

To get established in God, one has to go beyond all the Gunas From that state there is no fall The visions and other experiences we get when in Sattwa Guna disappear as soon as we fall to Rajas or Tamas Then we are extremely miserable, as we feel the separation from the Lord intensely This period of depression is called the dark night of the soul The only way

we can raise ourselves from this state is to remember God and pray to Him to raise us

Q In my case, I do remember God in that state, but I feel miserable because I see I have no love for God

Ramdas If that is the case, it is a good sign One who has real love never feels that he has love enough One is never satisfied with whatever one does for one's Beloved

WHO IS HANUMAN?

Q Swamiji, who and what is Hanuman?

Ramdas Hanuman himself was asked this question by Rama The answer was

देहबुद्ध्या दासोऽस्मीति जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

"As body I am your servant, as Jiva I am a part of you, and as Atman I am one with you" This is exactly what Hanuman is

Q Swamiji, what a joy you have brought here! There are waves and waves of it You don't mind if there are more than one wave, do you?

Ramdas Not at all Let us have more and more waves and let us all be drowned in them

GENEVA, 22nd August 1954

SUFFERING IS HELPFUL

Q Is illness or suffering necessary for the evolution of man in general?

Ramdas: Suffering of what type? Physical?

Q Physical too, — suffering of any kind

Ramdas Whether it is necessary or not, one has to pass through suffering It does come to us all in life, but we have to use it for our spiritual evolution Suffering brings us nearer God Ramdas will tell you how suffering helps us in our spiritual uplift When we are suffering physically, we try to get relief by taking medicine changing place, or some other means This is what we do at first But that does not seem to help us much Suffering follows wherever we go So long as we have the body, we cannot avoid suffering It can be overcome only by rising from the physical to the spiritual Ramdas will tell you his own experience

When he was wandering from place to place in India, barefoot, thorns used to prick his feet He was then mostly on a plane above the body-consciousness and was not aware of the thorns in his feet Even when he had fever in those days, he found himself in a state of divine ecstasy It was really a case of pain transmuted into joy Whenever anything was taken away from him, or he lost anything, he never felt the loss, for he had no sense of possession Generally, people are unhappy when they lose anything, whereas in a similar condition Ramdas remained perfectly cheerful These are instances of physical and other incidental sufferings We have to take it that they happen as willed by God for our good

We can be happy always only by effecting a radical change in ourselves So long as the ego-sense persists, we think 'This is my loss, that is my gain' Consequently, at one time we are happy, at another miserable When the ego-sense is absent we are calm serene and unaffected in all vicissitudes of good or evil fortune, success or failure, gain or loss We are free from the impact of the pairs of opposites Ramdas will give you an example

A man purchased a lottery ticket and a telegram brought him the news that he had won the first prize for which he got a million francs He felt very happy, indeed, to have got that

money Then he invested the money in business He bought a steamer for carrying merchandise Some months later, he got another telegram to say that his steamer had sunk in the mid-ocean He became now most miserable The first telegram gave him happiness and the second one gave him grief If 'he' were not there to receive both the telegrams, that is, if his ego-sense had vanished, there would have been none to be either happy or unhappy If you are one with the Divine within you and have eradicated your ego-sense completely, you will not be subject to the temporary emotions of pleasure and pain

SAINT SEES ONLY GOD

Q Can a saint or sage tell the state of spiritual evolution which has been reached by somebody he sees, or can he tell only about those who are his disciples?

Ramdas There are two ways of looking at this question From the absolute standpoint, the saint does not see anything except the Divine everywhere, and so he does not see the outer layers that cover the Supreme Consciousness within all beings In that vision, there is no question of observing or noticing the stage of spiritual evolution of anyone On the contrary, by his mere look, the saint awakens the Eternal in a person If the saint were to see any defect, his vision would not be perfect He looks into the Infinite, dormant in everyone, and brings it out He is therefore called the awakener In his presence you become aware of your immortal Spirit His touch and blessing are simply marvellous in their effect on you That is the mission of a saint

People come to tell Ramdas that so-and-so is a bad man, but when the person comes to the Ashram, or meets him elsewhere, Ramdas goes and embraces him It so happened in Kasaragod, — a town in South India, — a man was coming to see Ramdas in the Ashram which was then situated at that place A few minutes in advance of him, another man had come and reported to Ramdas that so-and-so was coming and that as he was a bad man, full of vices, he should not be permitted to step into the Ashram Ramdas was surprised how there could be a bad man The man referred to was seen coming As soon as he entered the Ashram, Ramdas went to him and gave him a warm embrace At this the informer-friend was quite taken aback The man whom Ramdas embraced fell at Ramdas' feet, and

bitterly weeping, said 'I am a sinful wretch! You are a saint How could you embrace me?' He wept and wept, with the result that all his vicious tendencies left him So, if Ramdas could transform anybody, he must do so only by seeing God in him If he observed weaknesses and frailties in people, his vision would not be pure

Ramdas' love is being poured spontaneously upon all How can he see any weakness in a person who is an expression of Divinity? Ramdas was often told by many, according to what he himself has said at one time, that in answering questions he was like a slot-machine You put a coin in the machine and immediately you get something in return, automatically Similarly, you put a question to Ramdas and you at once get the answer, given quite spontaneously He answers not because he sees defects in you, and feels you are not evolving and that you need instructions, or anything like that, but only because you want the question to be answered He sees only God in you all

FACE IS THE INDEX OF THE SOUL

Q You said there were two ways of looking at the question What is the next?

Ramdas Whether it be in the case of a disciple or any other person, when he comes before the saint, the spiritual state of the person automatically reflects in the mirror of the saint's consciousness It is not the outcome of the saint's observation or scrutiny, but he involuntarily makes out the spiritual progress of the person

Generally, a Sadhaka or spiritual aspirant who is going through devotional practices like prayer and meditation, will have a glow on his face and a lustre in his eyes From this one can make out distinctly that he has risen to a high spiritual state When the mind is free from selfish desires, the inner light shines on the face and in the eyes It is the pure mind alone that reflects God's light Face is the index of the soul When the soul is enlightened, the face is illumined

The instance is given of a hen hatching her eggs Her eyes have a vacant look, as its gaze is turned on the eggs So also, the Yogi's eyes have a vacant look as their gaze is inward It is said that he now sees and sees not He remains always absorbed in God-consciousness

Sri Ramakrishna could very well make out the nature of a

person who came to him Once, a man was coming to see Sri Ramakrishna, when Swami Vivekananda was sitting by his side The man was not permitted by Sri Ramakrishna to approach him, as Sri Ramakrishna knew he was very impure Swami Vivekananda got astonished at this He pulled the man near Sri Ramakrishna saying that he needed more help from him than anyone else

A saint knows the progress of a spiritual aspirant who comes to him But he does not tell him about it, even if he is asked, for two reasons If he discloses what he knows and tells the aspirant that he has not advanced, the remark will tend only to discourage the aspirant and slacken his efforts On the other hand, if he tells the aspirant that he has advanced, he would be proud of it and pride will cause his fall This is the reason why the saint does not disclose to the aspirants their progress or otherwise He only says 'Go ahead, God is at your back'

Q You see somebody is very desperate and discouraged and feels he has not made any progress Is it not right in such a case to draw his attention to the progress he has made during the last ten years or so and thus encourage him?

Ramdas That is a different question altogether If a man goes and tells the saint that he has not made any progress, the saint will of course assure him that he has no reason to despair He will further tell him that the spiritual progress of a man takes place from within and the process is often slow Even when the aspirant is progressing inwardly, he is not conscious of it until the inward change becomes manifest in his outer or surface life It is well that so long as this external transformation has not taken place, the aspirant examines himself from time to time and removes the obstacles that stand in the way of the fullest revelation of the Divine in him He must be humble, gentle and simple in all his ways The main obstruction is the ego

IT IS GREAT TO KNOW OURSELVES LITTLE

Saints have a way of their own to teach people how to be humble Sri Ramakrishna is rightly looked upon as an incarnation by many in India and also in Western countries Do you know how he spoke of himself on one occasion?

You must have heard of Keshab Chandra Sen, a great reformer and the head of the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal He used to visit Sri Ramakrishna often Although the Brahmo

Samaj was against idol worship, Keshab Chandra Sen had a great regard for Sri Ramakrishna, who was a worshipper in the Kali temple Once it happened that Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers had staged a drama, in which Keshab had played the chief role A few days later, he and his party came to see Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar In the course of the talks, one of the followers of Keshab Chandra Sen told Sri Ramakrishna that they had enacted a drama some days earlier in which Keshab Chandra Sen had assumed the hero's part and played it very well Keshab Chandra Sen then calmly asked Sri Ramakrishna if he were given a part in the drama, what role he would like to play Do you know what reply he gave? 'I will play the role of the dust of your feet,' said Sri Ramakrishna The reply produced pin-drop silence in the room

When we are proud, we are far away from God True is the saying' 'It is little to know ourselves great, and great to know ourselves little' Know, God is the all-powerful and omnipresent Reality What are we before Him? We are like the glow-worm that shines in the darkness and thinks highly of itself As soon as the sun rises, it is nowhere to be seen So our ego poses itself to be all-important, being possessed by ignorance We are indeed nothing before the greatness and glory of God Who has become the vast universe Our mind by constant contemplation of the Divine should shed its individuality and become one with Him The way is self-surrender and self-effacement

BE LIKE THE KITTEN

Q. Which is the quickest way to attain the goal?

Ramdas There are two ways one is to expand your ego to infinity, and the other is to reduce it to nothing, the former by knowledge, and the latter by devotion The Jnani says 'I am God — the Universal Truth' The devotee says 'I am nothing, O God, you are everything' In both cases, the ego-sense disappears

Here, Ramdas is reminded of the illustration of the kitten and the baby monkey It is safe to be like the kitten that is held by its mother, and not to be like the baby monkey that holds on to its mother There is real danger in the latter case, whereas there is none in the former God should hold us, not we Him Ramdas has actually witnessed a scene of a baby monkey that was clasping its mother, losing its hold and falling and getting killed when

the mother was leaping from one branch of a tree to another So, the safer and surer way is to take refuge in God and be ever under His grace and protection

REMEMBRANCE LEADS TO SURRENDER

Q How can we make a total surrender to the will of the Divine in the condition in which we are now?

Ramdas We can resign ourselves to the Will of God and keep away our ego-sense, only by a continuous remembrance of God, just as we keep darkness away from a room by means of a light The moment the light is out, there is darkness again Even so, the moment we forget God, the ego reappears Self-surrender is the result of a constant stream of God-remembrance It is now that we recognise that God's will alone is supreme and our will is nothing This is why Ramdas has been prescribing the repetition of God's Name as a means of continued contact with God

Q At every moment of our life, we have to make a choice Is Ramnam a sufficient guide to us in the choice we have to make?

Ramdas Certainly! When you are remembering God by taking His Name, you will get right guidance from within, whenever any difficulty or doubt arises, sit silent, remembering God, and you will get the necessary guidance as to what you should do

Q After all, God has given us some sense of discrimination Why not we make use of it? Why should we worry God with small problems?

Ramdas The faculty of discrimination should be used only to distinguish the Real from the unreal We should detach ourselves from the unreal and attach ourselves to the Real Having found that the Real is the sole aim in life, our struggle thereafter is to realise It At this stage we have to seek the help of one who has realised the Truth, as our guide

As God alone can help us, we have to pray to Him to give us the right guidance There are many obstacles on the path and they have to be overcome for achieving success God should be our help here Just as the child appeals to the mother, whenever in trouble, so also we should pray to God Who is our Father and Mother, to clear the impediments on the path God is called the 'Saviour of the helpless' When we feel helpless and pray to Him, He comes to our rescue None else can save us

Q Does it mean opening our heart to Him, to be as sincere as possible and feel 'Thy will be done'?

Ramdas That is the easiest way,—surrendering yourselves to His will. Submission to Him is the best course instead of setting your puny will against His almighty will.

Q May God make us love Him more than we love the world!

HAPPINESS AND MISERY OUR OWN MAKING

Q I was worried about how there could be happiness and misery in the world together. On one side there is happiness, on the other there is misery.

Ramdas Happiness and misery are our own making. The problem is first with us and then with the world. Nobody is responsible for what we are. We choose to be happy and we are happy. Happiness and misery are states of the mind. The same situation that makes us happy at one time does not give us happiness at another. So, happiness and misery are relative terms, not based upon a fixed standard. This is true in regard to all situations and persons in the world. You know, what is happiness to us at one time is not felt to be so at another. So it is merely a change of attitude of the mind that makes us happy or otherwise. What we make we can unmake by the grace of God.

Q Is it not the original sin that is responsible for all our miseries?

Ramdas Original or not, we are suffering. And it is because of our ego.

ORIGIN OF EVIL

Q How did this sinful being come into existence?

Ramdas That is the mystery. Our task now is not to find out how the ego came, but to try to get it out. A bird which is caught in a cage does not worry to know how it came into the cage, but it strives to find ways and means to escape from it.

Q According to almost all the religions, we have got on one side the evil force and on the other the good force. Is it your feeling that these evil and good forces were born into the universe at first? Otherwise, for instance, if there is a benevolent God, why should He not make the world free from evil? He can create man without the evil mind.

Ramdas Here again, we must speak from the standpoint of the individual so long as individuality persists in us We have made ourselves what we are We are not to blame God for it God is not a creator in the sense He is generally understood to be In the eyes of God there is no evil He has projected Himself and the projection is the whole universe and everything in it So the world is not a creation but a projection The sense of individuality is responsible for all apparent evils God is all-benevolent and all-loving

HAPPINESS IS WITHIN

It is not from external conditions that we can judge the happiness or misery of a man He may be enjoying the maximum luxury, having the highest worldly positions and so on, but still he is most unhappy Kings on the throne are not happy, people rolling in wealth and living in luxury are not happy Happiness is a state of mind and does not depend upon any external condition at all "Mind in its own place can make a hell of heaven and heaven of hell" We make ourselves happy, and we make ourselves unhappy also If we remember God constantly and link our thoughts with Him, we can be happy in all situations and circumstances.

Ramdas can demonstrate this truth from his own experience He is now sitting before you comfortably, in warm clothing and with all things provided Some years ago, he was without a home or resting place, and was clothed in rags, but he was equally happy and was radiant with joy His mind was not attached to things of the world, but was one with the Infinite and therefore, he was perfectly blissful It was then that he discovered the truth, from experience, that it was not the external state that made one happy or miserable, but one's mental attitude towards it

Ramdas was living in the world at one time just like others, having a home of his own and earning his bread After the change came, he was sent out by his Master into the wide world as a mendicant For food he had to beg from door to door Naturally, in that condition he ought to have been unhappy for having been deprived of his normal so-called comfortable worldly life and would have consequently blamed God, fate or people around him, as responsible for his so-called fallen state But Ramdas was perfectly contented, his mind was in tune with God

and he was having absolute peace within Monarchs would have envied him for the blessed state he was enjoying, although his external position was, in worldly estimation, far from desirable Though saints are outwardly handicapped in many ways, they are inwardly calm and peaceful, because they have discovered the secret of happiness within them, — a state which is independent of circumstances So, if we know the secret of happiness within, we can be perennially happy

INDIA'S SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Q This teaching of Hinduism, that happiness should be searched for within and that we should not care for external things, is perhaps responsible for what India is today, full of misery etc Do you not think so?

Ramdas The conditions in India may not be exemplary, but they are better than in many other countries Otherwise, why should people go from Europe and America and other places to India where, they say, they find real peace and happiness? They declare that India is a land of peace, and in that respect it is superior to all other countries of the world India's aim is peace, India loves to live in peace To judge happiness or misery of a people from a mere material standard of plenty or penury is wrong

Q My question was not directed towards any political peace, but towards famine, disease, etc

Ramdas India is at present passing through a period of transition The things happening there are inevitable Worse things have happened in other countries under similar conditions There are conflicts of ideologies and India is trying to get over these hurdles and a huge effort is being made There are so many handicaps which are responsible for the disturbed state of affairs and they have to be faced On the whole India is happier and more peaceful than any other country in spite of these troubles

Q You say that India is improving Is it not due to the fact that the general population is gradually passing from the hands of the spiritual teachers to the politicians and the hold of the spiritual teachers on them is loosening?

Ramdas No Yours is only a superficial view As Ramdas has been going from place to place in the country every year, he has been feeling the pulse of India And as far as the spiritual health is concerned, he has found the heart of India perfectly

sound in regard to her belief in the supremacy of Spirit over Matter This conclusion is based upon direct knowledge of the deep interest which thousands in India take in religion, and they expect God will relieve India of her present difficulties and give her the spiritual leadership over the nations of the world

Q. Why should one be evil and another be good?

Ramdas There is no evil in God When we see the whole universe as He, we do not see evil anywhere Ramdas can give you an instance from the Mahabharata. Prince Yudhishtira was asked by Lord Krishna to go round the world and find out a bad man But Yudhishtira could not find one Prince Duryodhana was asked to find out a good man. He also went round the world, but could not find a good man anywhere What was the reason? Yudhisthira was a good man and so he could not see evil in anyone, while Duryodhana was bad and he could not see goodness in any man

For those who possess the purest vision — the vision of Divinity — the world is God and so all are good It is important that our inner eye must be opened, so that we can feel God's presence within and without In the course of his wanderings over the country, Ramdas once went to a temple in South India where he met a blind Sadhu Ramdas was accompanied by a doctor who examined the eyes of the blind Sadhu and said that a minor operation would restore his normal sight and offered to do the operation The Sadhu then said 'Whatever God has done is for my good Although my external eyes do not see things, my inner eye has gained the right vision and sees the light divine So I do not care for the external sight, which is nothing but a trap'

GURU IS ONLY ONE

Q Can the same person receive several Mantras from different Gurus?

Ramdas There are not many Gurus There is only one Guru In this connection, Ramdas can give you the example of Mataji She, after the passing away of her husband, was in great distress She did not even want to live She started on the spiritual path by taking a Mantra from a saint, but did not at first gain any peace She went to another saint and got initiated by him She began to repeat the Mantra given by him and her mind gained a certain measure of peace She lived for some

months in the service of the saint in his Ashram, but was not fully out of the woods Her mind was still restless Lastly, she came and saw Ramdas And, as stated by herself, she got complete peace Now, if you ask her how it was that she had so many Gurus, she says she has not many Gurus, since the first, second and third, though apparently three, are really one They are all forms of one Guru In one form, the Guru took her to a certain stage, in the second, further on, and in the third, to the goal

Guru is one but assumes several forms In some cases, as one person, the Guru may take one to the goal, but with her it was different She does not make any distinction between one and the others She never says she was initiated by three Gurus, but by three different forms of the same Guru Guru is one, the all-pervading, eternal Brahman, — Brahman assuming human form But Guru appearing as a particular person alone is ordained to save a particular soul If you go to a saint who is not destined to act as your Guru, you may not feel inspired, whereas many others may get spiritual light from him You may go to another from whom you may receive the needed divine influence, but this may not be true with regard to others who go to him All saints are equally great

GURU IS GREATER THAN GOD

Guru is greater than God God might be able to give you certain things you want of the world, but if you ask Him to grant you liberation from the cycle of birth and death, He has to take the form of a Guru to fulfil your prayer That is why Ramdas often says that God cannot do what Guru can

Q You spoke of getting instructions from the Guru If one does not get sufficient guidance from within, one should get it from the outside Guru Thinking from that angle, can a Sadhaka get initiation of Mantras from several Gurus, or, if he gets from one, does it mean that he should no longer look for help to those who gave him Mantra before that?

Ramdas The last one should be his guide

DO NOT CHANGE THE ISHTA

Q Suppose somebody had received initiation, say from Sri Ramana Maharshi or Sri Aurobindo or any of the great saints, and at a later stage felt that he wanted to change over to the

path of devotion to some other Ishta than the one he was shown, and wanted the Mantra for that, does that mean he would be unfaithful to his former Gurus by trying to get such an initiation and thereby lose the benefit of the guidance of the former Gurus?

Ramdas It would be better for him not to change the Ishta He should be faithful to the Ishta adopted by him once as his adored Ideal He may go to several saints to draw inspiration from them so that his faith on that Ishta may be more firmly established

After Ramdas received initiation from his Guru, he went to Sri Ramana Maharshi Ramana Maharshi did not initiate any body But Ramdas got inspiration from Ramana Maharshi to repeat with greater faith and devotion the Mantra given to him by his Guru He later went to Sri Siddharudha—another great Yogi —when some friends suggested that he should get initiated in Shiva-mantra from Sri Siddharudha Ramdas told them that no such initiation was necessary as he was already initiated in Ram-mantra

This matter was brought to the notice of the saint Then, the Mahatma said that Ramdas was right and that the Mantra Ramdas was repeating was as powerful as the Shiva-mantra, that there was no difference between them, and Shiva and Ram were names of the same God

In fact, Ramdas had no desire to get instructions from others because God in His own way, from within him, guided him from step to step in his progress towards Him There is no meaning in changing the Mantra according to our whims If we with all faith and devotion repeat the Mantra given by our Guru, that Mantra will take us to the summit of God-realisation What needs to be done is that we should make our heart perfectly pure so that God's love and power may be revealed in us This can be achieved only by the Guru's grace and repetition of his Mantra

Q Has the quality and power of the individual Guru any bearing on the Mantra, or is it like the Mantras given by Roman Catholic churches?

Ramdas It is the other way We believe that the Guru gives his own power to the disciple through the Mantra If the vehicle, the Guru through whom the Mantra is given, is impure,

the impurity is infused into the receiver through the Mantra, otherwise, purity and power are transmitted The Mantra by itself is a saviour, no doubt But it depends upon the initiator also

THE KUNDALINI

Q When meditating on the Mantra received, should it be accompanied with a meditation of the given Chakras?

Ramdas There are six Chakras in the human body, according to Sage Patanjali But, in the path of devotion, we may take only two Chakras for practice of meditation It is said in the Patanjali Yoga that Kundalini the divine power, is lodged within us in the Solar Plexus, coiled up like a serpent If the person who dwells in ignorance is immersed in the pleasures of the senses, does not either believe in God or turn his mind towards Him, and is inimical to anything relating to God, the Kundalini remains sleeping in the Muladhara Chakra, which is in the Solar Plexus

When the time comes for the person to turn towards God, the serpentine power Kundalini wakes up, becomes active and rises through the higher Chakras, marking the progress towards the Divine, as She ascends through the nerve called Sushumna along the spinal column As and when this power touches the various Chakras, certain symptoms peculiar to those stages are noticed in the aspirant indicating the changes going on in him The devotee does not care to study these signs or watch the progress within him of the Kundalini, as he is absorbed in his love and contemplation of the Eternal Beloved, God

He surrenders himself totally to God and meditates upon Him in the heart-centre, or the centre between the eye-brows This practice automatically awakens the Kundalini and makes Her rise to the Sahasrara Chakra, in the crown of the head, without his being conscious of the process When the Kundalini reaches the head-centre, he forgets his body and realises the Brahman His life is now totally transformed into the divine consciousness The characteristics of the Siddhas or perfect ones are given in many scriptures They are one with God and behold Him everywhere They see Divinity in the small as well as in the big, in all beings and things For them, there is no sense of duality, it is all oneness everywhere There is no sense of virtue or vice.

They are free from lust, greed and wrath Their lives have become completely pure and holy

This blessed state can be attained by devotion and repetition of His Name

Q Does it mean that the Kundalini rises from Chakra to Chakra and stops in that centre in which the actual needs of the Sadhaka require it to stop?

Ramdas *It is not the need that makes it stop*, but the inability of the Sadhaka to raise it higher It may stop or it may even go down It may happen that when it reaches, say the heart-centre, due to contact of wrong persons, change over to unfavourable environments, slackness in discipline, or unsuitable diet, the Kundalini may fall to a lower Chakra In some cases we have seen it rise up to the Ajna Chakra, the centre between the eye-brows, and then fall down But, it would ascend again if the aspirant intensifies his longing for God

When it reaches the Ajna Chakra, the aspirant gets visions of light and divine forms But the moment it drops down, he loses those visions and becomes very miserable This is called the 'dark night of the soul' In Sanskrit, the word is 'Viraha', — agony of separation Without Guru's grace, it is difficult for the Kundalini to cross the Ajna centre, cutting the knot there

In the life of Sri Ramakrishna it is said his Guru, Totapuri, opened up this Ajna centre by pressing with a piece of glass at the spot between his eye-brows, when the former was in a state of meditation At once the knot was broken and Sri Ramakrishna went into Nirvikalpa Samadhi This is true of all saints Their Sadhana ceases here and they now develop a childlike nature All their longings come to an end, since they are one with the Divine Their ego-sense totally disappears It is a wonderful realisation Some orthodox dualistic religions do not accept the truth of this absolute realisation

SUFIS' EXPERIENCE

Q In the lives of Sufi saints, we have read that when they reached that state they fell down, — unconscious or dead

Ramdas Ramdas remembers the oft-quoted analogy given by Sri Ramakrishna, to show what a tremendous effect this Adwaitic realisation produces on the aspirant He says, it is like a huge elephant entering a small hut when the hut breaks to pieces When the all-powerful Reality is suddenly revealed in

a person, his body cannot sometimes stand the shock of that experience. Unless the physical part is prepared through Sadhana to absorb the shock, the result is as stated by you. Those who can stand it are the Gurus who guide humanity.

There is one unique feature in Sufi spiritual experience. They pine for God and want to remain pining for Him without seeing Him. If He comes, they turn their back, as it were, for, once they have Him, they cannot pine for Him. They prefer to long and wait for Him. All their prayers are piteous wails for Him. The reason they give is that after seeing Him, their love for Him vanishes — the love that nourished them so long with its sweet sense of anticipation. Possession palls, the highest becoming a commonplace. There is great force in this argument, and to prove it they offer an illustration. There is a herd of sheep grazing on the hills. When they become thirsty and do not find water nearby, they become restless and run helter-skelter in search of it. At last, they behold a river flowing far away and rush towards it with great eagerness. They reach the river, get into the water, drink to their fill and after the thirst is quenched, what do they do? They make the water dirty and come out of it. They no more love or pine for it. Similarly the Sufis say that by having God, the devotees will have no love left in them for Him.

RAMDAS'S EXPERIENCE

Ramdas shall now present his own experience. Once, when Ramdas was in Chitrakut, a sacred place in Uttar Pradesh, India, he went to see a famous Sannyasi sitting on an elevated seat in the midst of a congregation of about two hundred of his Sannyasi-disciples. The Mahatma asked Ramdas what spiritual stage he had reached. Ramdas simply said: "Ramdas is like the river Ganges which, having reached the ocean, still flows towards it." There is a spiritual experience in which the devotee, having become one with the Divine, still remains separate from Him as His servant or child, and loves and serves Him and plays with Him as a child with its mother.

Ramdas can tell you that the joy of this experience is simply unparalleled. Ramdas is a child now talking to his Mother who is manifest in so many forms sitting before him. Ramdas is simply bubbling with joy. For the play of love, there must be two entities. Beyond duality, there is Absolute Oneness.

Remaining on the highest peak of Adwaita, non-duality, you should still be acting on the dual plane and living playfully like a blissful child

GANGA FLOWS ON FOR EVER

Q In one of his songs, Bhai Vir Singhji says that the Ganges, after reaching the sea, got disgusted and returned to the Himalayas

Ramdas It can also be said that the Ganges ever continues to flow even after reaching the ocean Sri Ramakrishna maintained his relationship with Kali, his Mother, even after realising his oneness with Her That we are one with the Mother is not a state to be attained anew We are always one with Her It is only in the light of knowledge that we become aware of it It is not a fresh gain or acquisition It is there always But to have love and adoration for the Divine, even after this experience, not only perfects your spiritual experience, but also grants you rare and ineffable ecstasy

Many people think that Ramdas is not an Adwaitin and that he is on the lower rung of the ladder because he still emphasises on the dual aspect, maintaining his relationship with God as Mother and himself as Her child They ask why he should continue to have this relationship when he knows that he is one with God Ramdas' reply is that there is nothing comparable to the joy which he gets in this sweet relationship with God True love is based on the experience of oneness in Spirit with our Beloved The Beloved within is seen as a vast manifestation before us In other words, love for Him means love for all the beings in the world You now look upon the world as Lila and not as Maya as a play and not as an illusion

GOD IS ONE AND MANY

Q If God is in duality is He not in Maya also?

Ramdas He is one as well as many You may call the many as Maya or Lila The multiple universe is He One has become the many

Q There are some schools among the Buddhists and also among the Hindus that teach that Samadhi or the highest superconscious experience comes only once that it comes suddenly and any experience prior to it is of no value at all There is another school which says that we have to pass through a suc-

cession of experiences before we reach the highest

Ramdas: The highest state is the Moksha of the Hindus which is the same as the Nirvana of the Buddhists. In other religions, it is held that the duality always persists and that after man leaves this world he goes to a higher world like Heaven or Paradise. There is no possibility of his becoming one with God. He will eternally remain separate from Him, enjoying the presence or company of God. The believers in Moksha and Nirvana hold that the higher worlds do exist, but they say we have to transcend them by the extinction of individuality and be absorbed in the oneness of the Brahman.

This experience of Moksha or Nirvana is indescribable. Buddha aptly says 'Do not dip the string of thought into the Unfathomable; he who questions errs and he who answers errs.' Buddha did not attempt to define the Ultimate Truth because it is inexpressible. So also the Hindu scriptures describe the state of Moksha only in terms of negation, as 'Neti', 'Neti' — not this, not this. According to them, Mouna or silence alone can indicate the Truth which is beyond all words and thoughts.

WORLD IS AN EXPRESSION OF GOD

So long as we are living and moving in the world, we cannot take it as unreal. Otherwise, where was the necessity for Buddha or Shankaracharya to go from place to place after attaining liberation to preach this highest philosophy? In fine, we can say, verily the world is the expression of Truth or God. The still, calm and static Spirit has revealed Itself as the universe.

The Yoga Vasishta speaks of several stages in meditation. We go deeper and deeper and are lost in the Nirvikalpa which is total transcendence of our body-consciousness. Now, our mind and senses are also at a standstill and yet we are aware of ourselves as Brahman.

A STORY

In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story. Once there was a talk between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva is one of the Hindu Trinity, who is always in a state of Samadhi. His place is often in the cremation ground. He used freely to roam about, never feeling separate from the universe. He would leave Parvati in Kailasa, while on his itinerary. Parvati keenly felt the separation from her Lord. One day, Parvati asked Shiva to teach her to

meditate and attain Samadhi, so that she could always remain in that state without at any time feeling the separation Shiva asked her to sit down in Asana, close her eyes and turn her gaze within and meditate Then, the following dialogue took place

Shiva What do you see now?
Parvati I see your form before my mental vision
Shiva Go beyond the form What do you see now?
Parvati I see a brilliant light
Shiva Still go beyond the light, what next?
Parvati I hear the sound 'Om'
Shiva· Transcend the sound What is your experience now?

To this last question, there was no answer Parvati had become one with the Cosmic Self! There was now for her no subject and object, no seer and seen, hearer and heard, all had dissolved into one Reality, one Existence There was only one changeless, nameless, formless, non-dual Brahman Some time later, when Parvati was gradually coming back to the body-consciousness, she was heard uttering softly 'I am Brahman'!

This story of Shiva and Parvati may have actually happened, or it may have been told only to show by way of illustration the process of meditation and the ultimate realisation Its historicity does not affect the truth revealed in it

OUR PART IN THE WORLD-PLAY

Q As you say, when the whole world is the Lila of God, should we ignore the Lila or should we take part in it? Should we resist and try to abstain, or should we be tools of that Lila?

Ramdas We have to play, each one, a part allotted to us by Him who is the Master of the play He is within us and He is responsible for this Lila If we are aware of Him within us, we play our part well If we forget Him, we play our part ill While in the former case we reap happiness, in the latter we reap misery

Q There are two ways of taking part in the Lila of God one to be consciously playing the part, and the other, to let ourselves go — just float unconsciously, — so that He may take us wherever He likes

Ramdas Ramdas can only say that we must be conscious that we are His tools It is only then that we play our part well The other way you speak of is to be like the dry leaf blown

off by the wind, not knowing that it is being blown by the wind. In our case, we should be aware that we act as He wills. When we write an inspiring poem with a pen, the pen does not know the great work it has turned out and thus cannot derive any satisfaction from it. Similarly, if we are not conscious that we are instruments of God, we cannot enjoy even the good work that He might make us do. To cite another example, we should not be like the spoon in sugar, that does not enjoy its sweetness.

Q Suppose we are conscious of what we are doing, don't you think that we are taking the risk of making a mistake?

Ramdas Consciousness should be only that of God within us, who is making us play our part.

THE ROOT AND FRUIT ARE ONE

Q Is it not better to remain like a dead leaf than to be conscious and have the joy? That joy is after all a trifling thing, is it not?

Ramdas It is definitely not a trifling joy. It is immortal joy you get when you know you are an instrument in the hands of the Divine. It is He who makes you talk, work and do all things. In such a state, your life flows spontaneously in streams of joy, and action itself gives you joy, because you have found the source of all actions in the Divine. In the state of ignorance your mind is aiming at the fruit of your actions which is perishable and cannot therefore give you that joy which your life aspires for.

Action must be its own fruit. And this is possible when you are one with God and then act. Now, action itself will be bliss to you. The sugar-cane is sweetest at its root. Here too the root and the fruit are one, equally sweet. All the movements of your body are waves of joy, because the source of all movements is in God. God is immortal Ananda or Bliss and all that comes from Him is also Ananda.

Q If it is God that acts in me, whatever I do must be all right, even the crucifixion of Christ.

Ramdas If you are conscious that God is acting through you, you will never do any wrong. You do wrong only when you forget God. Hence, if you lead the right life, the light of God within you will guide you and you will always be walking on the path of truth and goodness and be incapable of doing anything unrighteous.

Q If the purpose of our life is happiness, why are we created at all?

Ramdas To get that happiness

Q Why did God take so much interest to create us and make us search for that happiness?

Ramdas That is His will It is like the mother and the child playing hide-and-seek, and though the child knows where the mother is hiding, it takes some time to find her That is the play

SCIENCE ON THE BORDERLAND OF SPIRIT

Q Do you think scientific progress is a way of spiritual progress?

Ramdas Scientists have now come to a point of discovery that matter and energy are the same, that matter is but condensed energy This is a great advance and takes science to the frontiers of the Spirit Beyond energy there is the static, changeless, all-pervading Spirit The mind can accept and comprehend energy only as power manifested in the Universe Owing to its limitations, the mind cannot rise beyond this sphere The changing mind cannot know the changeless Knowledge of that which is beyond comes only when the mind is still or ceases to move So, it is by transcending the dynamics of the body, senses and intellect that the experience of the static, calm and all-pervading Spirit is gained From this unthinkable, omnipresent, absolute, static Existence has come forth, as an emanation, the vast universe before us

According to Hindu philosophy, the world is a projection of the immutable Spirit which supports it This, the static, is called the Purusha, and the dynamic the Prakriti In the still lake, there is no movement, no waves As soon as wind blows, the still water is disturbed, and waves are formed The waves are nothing but water in motion Form means movement and *vice versa* So it follows that these static and dynamic aspects of the Divine co-exist and are one in the Supreme God-head Look at a top that is made to revolve at a very high velocity It is called the sleeping top Here you see motion and rest together Highest velocity appears as perfect stillness Though the analogy of a top is not entirely applicable to the Divine, it helps to show in a way how rest and motion, the static and the dynamic, can be seen in the same object at once

Generally we observe objects to be moving at one time and

motionless at another. But the great Truth or God is said to be moving and not moving at the same time. As Prakriti He moves, and as Purusha He moves not. Purusha and Prakriti co-exist and lose their distinction in a mysterious way. Here our intellect is baffled and cannot comprehend. The fact is, this Truth is realised only when the intellect ceases to function.

Yogis say: 'At once I act and act not, I see and see not.' When this experience came to Ramdas first, several years ago, when he was taking a walk, he was wondering whether he was walking at all. He was so deeply one with the changeless static and silent Spirit of his being that the movement of his limbs seemed to have nothing to do with him. Later on, he got a further experience, by which he came to know that his and the world's movement was only the expression or manifestation of the Static Purusha.

The scientists have so far discovered only the secrets of the Dynamic. But they have come almost to its borderline. By yet another step or two they can take a leap into the beyond, enter the realm of the Static and explore that also. The Nirvana of Buddha, the Moksha of the Hindus, is the experience of this Static, eternal Truth or Spirit. What Ramdas has been saying may appear to be strange and unacceptable to a solely ratiocinative mind. When he attained this acme of realisation, he transcended the Dwandwas or pairs of opposites such as high and low, honour and dishonour, good and bad, joy and grief, or gain and loss. In the early days of his Sadhana, these opposites used to rise in his mind, clash with each other and break like soap bubbles.

What you experience after these thoughts have completely ceased to flit about in the mind, does not admit of description because it is inexpressible. A Brahmin once sent his two sons to study the Vedas and Upanishads under a learned Pandit. Having completed their studies after twelve years they returned home. Their father asked one of them: 'Have you understood Brahman?' The boy said 'Yes' and started quoting Sloka after Sloka from the scriptures to explain what Brahman was. Listening patiently to his son's verbose exposition, the father told him: 'Boy, you have not understood Brahman.' He then asked his other boy if he had understood what Brahman was. The second boy did not give any answer but kept quiet. The father asked

him the same question twice, thrice and four times Still the boy remained silent The father then said 'My boy, I am delighted to see that you have really understood Brahman' This goes to show that by silence alone can one express the Truth

GO BEYOND THE INTELLECT

Q I have seen some people prove their religious creeds on the basis of scientific theories Even in the writings of Swami Vivekananda, he quoted theories to prove that Vedanta was right

Ramdas Religion is sufficient proof unto itself

Q There are some things which are said by people who do not know more than they do, about walking and not walking, talking and not talking, etc This would lead us to think that the human intellect is just ignorant Therefore, should we continue to try to get further education in the usual sense of the term?

Ramdas We have to unlearn what we have already learnt The intellect is given to us to know that we do not know anything Socrates has rightly said that to know that you do not know anything is true knowledge Intellect can take you only to a certain stage Beyond that if you want to go, you must ask the intellect to be still Intellect very often meddles, even after its task is done, and prevents us from rising to higher planes of consciousness After a certain stage is reached, the intellect must cease interfering with our progress

Q How can we get it out of the way?

Ramdas Think of the Eternal and Infinite, and automatically the intellect will stop worrying you That is the process of meditation To think of God is to lose yourself in Him The mind disappears and God only is There is a saying "As a man thinketh, so he becometh" When the mind thinks of the body, you believe you are the body When it thinks of God, you realise you are He,—the all-pervading, changeless and formless Reality Intellectual attainments, whatever they be, do not help us It is seen, in the lives of some saints, that in spite of their having had no education at all, they were able to attain the vision of God and realise Him This goes to show that learning is not necessarily a help on the path Intellect is there only to discriminate between the Real and the unreal, and when this is done, the intellect should cease to bother Dedication of ourselves to God and finding Him is the next step

THE PLACE OF INTELLECT

Q Will you, then, say that people who are intellectually-minded will be helped to some extent by the study of Vedanta and after that they have to give it up and pass on to Bhakti?

Ramdas Yes, so long as the intellect is active in us, it creates nothing but doubts and thereby obstructs our progress

Q What you said about intellect being able to lead us only up to a certain point is on the intellectual level, and you expect us to understand intellectually, and it is after we have understood intellectually that we can resort to something else?

Ramdas Intellect alone cannot help you to realise God. This has to be understood, of course, through intellect As Sri Aurobindo has said 'Reason is a helper and it is also a bar'

Q Will you say it is inadvisable to give an active part to the intellect?

Ramdas What is the active part of the intellect? Let us find it out Can it define the Infinite? It cannot It can understand so many things of the external world of changes, but the Changeless One it cannot know It is by stilling the intellect that we know by experience, that we are immortal Ramdas remembers to have read in the Bible the words "Be still and know that I am God" What is meditation, except a process by which you stop the waves of the mind and achieve perfect tranquillity, which is called Samadhi?

MIND MUST DISAPPEAR

Q As regards the part the mind can play in spiritual development, I believe, we should not fall into the mistake that it does nothing After all, it was necessary to bring us to a particular point, just like the car which we take up to the door of the house and leave it there, before we enter the room

Ramdas But in the case of the mind, after you have reached the goal, it automatically disappears Then, what is called intuition starts to work in you Your vision is universal and you do things spontaneously If you are really keen on entering the gateway of Immortality, the mind should totally disappear It is from the Divine we now get real inspiration When the sculptor, the artist and the musician produce masterpieces they do so under divine inspiration After the work is over, they themselves find that they have done something extraordinary and wonderful This inspiration is with them only when they

are absorbed in their work At other times they do not have it, whereas a saint is always in union with God, living and working under inspiration

CONCENTRATION AND INSPIRATION

Q What is the place of concentration and inspiration?

Ramdas God is the prime source of all power, grace and beauty We went to Rome and saw St Peter's Church This magnificent structure is born of divine inspiration, and when we stand before it our hearts are aglow with the highest spiritual exaltation If we go inside the Church, there again we meet with such beautiful works of art, expressing the excellence and fascination of the holy lives of saints Their lifelike marble figures adorn the arches in the walls, in the midst of which stand out prominently the images of the great saviour Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary

The Bhagavad Gita says योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् meaning that Yoga means skill in action A man with a distracted mind cannot achieve anything Concentration on a great ideal is essential for everyone We have been told Tennyson was in the habit of constantly repeating his own name, and it was through deep concentration he could produce the finest poetry by reading which your mind is raised to superconscious realms Truly, tremendous power flows into us when we concentrate and are absorbed in God

Q Even in the physical phenomenon we see the power of concentration But mental concentration, real and full, leads to total stoppage of vibration When we have reached that state, the world stands transformed

Ramdas When through concentration the mind becomes still, you are no longer controlled by your lower nature that held you under its sway, but you become a vehicle of the Divine Power, making manifest your higher nature Your actions now cannot but be beneficial to humanity, as you are the servant of that Universal Power You are here to give others joy You may give to a person in distress riches and meet his physical needs, but that will be relief and happiness only for a short time If you awaken his heart and enable him to realise eternal bliss and peace, which is within him, you make him the highest gift that is imperishable

THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

Q Is attainment of divine joy a purpose in itself?

Ramdas No You must get the joy eternal for yourself in order to share it with others The least you can give another is a smile, — a smile full of love and joy This will remove the load of worries weighing on his mind A smile alone can do this

The purpose of life is to make it spontaneous It must freely flow out like water from a mountain-spring There must not be any impediment in its course Egoism is the one obstacle that prevents the smooth flow of life Do away with this obstruction and let life flow in all purity and joy Our purpose as human beings is to realise universal love, — love that unites all into one Dislike, arising from a sense of separation, must go if we wish to have true happiness and peace Love is the unfailing solvent of diversity and the essential cause of unity Love lends wings to the soul to soar high and become one with the infinite expanse of Divine Existence

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

Q Besides the subjective feeling of happiness that we feel from time to time, is it possible for one to have the same feeling of happiness always?

Ramdas It is possible of attainment by everybody, if only he tries We have been searching for happiness, but we have not found it because we have been looking for it at the wrong place So, attempts should be made to seek it at the right place Instead of looking for it within, we seek for it in external objects and conditions We know from experience that the search in the latter direction ends in failure and frustration We should therefore find the joy which is within us

Some people — why, they are many —fight shy of the term 'God' — maybe because they do not know what it really signifies God is pure joy and peace, and you may call Him by any other name such as Truth, Reality, Infinite, Consciousness

In the case of sense gratification, absence of it is misery and fulfilment is pleasure When one is there, the other is absent, as the two are ever inconstant We are like a pendulum moving betwixt a tear and a smile The sky of the mind is covered with thick dark clouds of desires and passions, with the result we are shut out from the inherent glory and radiance of the Divine dwelling with us

GENEVA,
23rd August 1954

ART AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Q. You spoke to us yesterday of science as a spiritual path. Could you say something about art as a spiritual path?

Ramdas: God is described in various aspects. In one of His aspects He is beauty. You might have heard of His attributes described in Hindu scriptures, as शान्तं शुभं सुन्दरम् ("Shantam, Shubham, Sundaram"). Shantam means 'serene', Subham means 'auspicious' and Sundaram means 'beautiful'. So, beauty is one of the qualities of God. If you see Him as beauty, through beauty you are drawn towards Him. You can find His beauty revealed in the works of art, the beauty which is in the mind of the artist. Really, beauteous is the Divine within us! The works of art, music and poetry express the charm and grace of the Divine. Therefore, sculptors, singers, poets and artists are by their aesthetic talents raised to a state of rapture which attunes them with God. We know sages and saints spoke and wrote in a language inspired by divine beauty. It is well known that the singer, when he sings of God, is lost in ecstasy, so much so his music brings him in direct contact with God. They have music in their soul and beauty in their eyes through which they achieve the highest spiritual experience.

The Vedas and the Upanishads were sung by the great Rishis in a cadence of beauty. Ramdas sees harmony among all these aspects of God, like beauty, power, glory, love, wisdom and joy. These attributes are so closely inter-related that we cannot take them as distinct from one another, for they apply to one Reality, who is spoken of as 'Satchidananda'. Again, these three characteristics of the Divine, — 'Sat' meaning Absolute Existence, 'Chit' meaning Infinite Consciousness, and 'Ananda' meaning Eternal Bliss, — although apparently three, are really one, as each quality contains the other two.

When we go to temples or churches, we see the beautiful images or statues of deities and saints. When we stand before these images, if our hearts are filled with pure love for God, who is symbolised by these images, we are completely lost in a divine

ecstasy, because we are deeply touched by the exalted splendour, magnificence and beauty of the divine forms before us

GOD-FORMS AND JAPA-YOGA

Q Is it helpful to be surrounded by such idols or forms, or is it necessary that for Japa-Yoga we should have one form before us?

Ramdas You can find among all the devotees of different religions that they all adore one Ishta, or chosen form of God, to the exclusion of all others, which fascinates them and they remain ever devoted to it This does not mean that they dislike the Ishtas of other devotees, but their love for their own is unique and all-absorbing There are instances of devotees appearing before the images of God which are not the forms of their favourite deities, and praying that God should appear before them in the forms that they love And their prayers have been granted

It happened once that Hanuman, a devotee of Rama, went to Dwaraka which was the kingdom of Lord Krishna He entered the park of the city and set about breaking branches of the trees and plucking fruits from them eating some of them and throwing away others The news reached Krishna that a big and powerful monkey had come and was destroying the trees in the park Krishna sent word to Hanuman to stop the mischief But Hanuman paid no heed to His words, with the consequence that Krishna Himself came on the scene

As soon as he saw Krishna coming, Hanuman turned his back towards Him Krishna asked 'What is the matter? Why do you turn your back?' Hanuman replied. 'I do not want to see Krishna I want to see Rama If you show Yourself as Rama, I will turn my face to You' On Krishna transforming Himself into Rama, Hanuman turned and made obeisance to Him So the favourite form of God we cherish in our hearts is so dear to us that we want always to behold that form alone, before we realise the entire universe as one gigantic form of Him, —the impersonal, omnipresent and eternal Truth

There is another instance of a saint who was also a worshipper of Rama After going round the whole of India on a pilgrimage, he came to Pandharpur to pay homage to Vithoba, —another name for Lord Krishna, —in the famous shrine at that place In the temple he prayed to the Lord "My Ishta being Rama,

O Lord, be gracious enough to transform Yourself, for my sake, into the form of Rama with His bow and arrow By seeing You in that form I shall be supremely blissful" He composed a song to this effect on the spot The result was that Vithoba's image changed into Rama

Similar was the case with the well-known saint Mirabai, a devotee of Lord Krishna She was so much attached to Krishna that she would have always Krishna's form alone before her, her love having been given to Him entirely She had always the vision of Krishna both internally and externally Such an exclusive form of worship ends in an universal vision of God, granting the devotee the highest spiritual experience of union and oneness with Him

BEAUTY AND NON-DUALITY

Q Is God more in beauty than in Adwaita?

Ramdas In reality, God is everywhere and He is in everything When you have developed your mind to rise beyond all duality, you see Him in all things You see neither beauty nor ugliness You only see Him and you are neither attracted nor repulsed by any form This state is beyond the sense of beauty or ugliness But before you reach it, generally you are drawn more towards beauty than towards ugliness Therefore, it is in beauty we realise Him, who is beyond all pairs of opposites If you take Him always to be beautiful, then you have something like a dislike for the ugly At first, you cannot but be attracted by a man of beautiful character, and repulsed by a man of ugly character Is it not so? A holy person attracts you and a man given to a life of sin does not attract you Light attracts you, while darkness does not

That is the usual way how devotees look at things They, for the time being, look upon light, goodness, holiness, and beauty, etc , as representing the Divine and adore them Then, they rise to a state in which these qualities and their opposites do not have their distinctive significance This is called a state of Dwandwatita, beyond the pairs of opposites Now, joy and grief, success and failure and the other pairs are the same to them Till then, they remain votaries of the good and the beautiful In the Bhagavad Gita, the aspirant is asked to see God in all that is magnificent, great and glorious The Lord says to Arjuna 'I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings,' 'Of luminous things,

I am the sun,' 'Of the mountains, I am the Himalayas,' 'Of purifiers, I am the wind' Summing up He says

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसंभवम् ॥

"Whatever being is glorious, prosperous, or strong, that, know thou, to be a manifestation of a part of My Splendour"

Truly, by worship, adoration and meditation on these objects you rise to that which is beyond all duality You know, ugliness does not attract us and on ugliness we cannot concentrate, and we cannot take any ugly object as a symbol representing the Divine It is difficult, whereas great, good and beautiful things we can easily take as expressions of God, and through them reach a state in which there is no name, no form, no change, no pairs of opposites, — a state which is a pure and infinite expanse of calmness, serenity, light, joy and peace After attaining this, when we look at things, whatever their nature or appearance, we are neither attracted nor repulsed by them

Some years ago, a lady came to Ramdas and asked. 'How is it you say that there is God everywhere and we should love everybody? Do you think this is the right way, to love *everybody?*'

Ramdas said 'That is right' She intellectually accepted the truth of this statement and tried to put it into practice After some time, Ramdas met her again, when she said 'Ramdas, your advice that I should love everybody has proved very difficult and harmful I tried to love everybody and came to grief' Then, Ramdas told her what he meant was that she should rise above the so-called love and hate and behold the pure, all-pervading Divine in all His manifestations, which meant she should love none

'Now I understand it,' she said

RISE ABOVE DWANDWAS

You should rise above likes and dislikes, you should have equal vision or Sama-darshan towards all, based upon the realisation of the formless in the forms, one in the many, unity in diversity There the external form and nature as such do not matter, whether they are good or bad You love all alike. At the beginning, wherever we see goodness, greatness and beauty, there we see the light of God, worship these, and through this

worship transcend our lower human nature and reach the great Impersonal Then our vision is equal, our love towards everybody is equal, we are indifferent whether one is good or bad, beautiful or ugly Ramdas became completely unmindful of these Dwandwas when he attained this supreme spiritual experience

Buddha is a great example of one who, through the attainment of Nirvana, had love and compassion towards all living creatures, whether they were good or bad Here is a story about Buddha, which is very interesting In the course of his wanderings, for spreading his message of Dharma or righteouness, he went to a certain place where lived a man who did not appreciate the life and mission of Buddha The man went up to Buddha and hurled abuses at him Buddha smiled and felt great compassion for him In his serene way, he told the man 'Friend! I am not at all affected by what you said to me Suppose you offer a fruit to anyone and the fruit is not accepted by him, where does it go?' It was a simple question and the man answered 'Of course it comes back to me' 'Friend! I can tell you I have not accepted your abuses' said Buddha That very instant, a change came over the man He fell at Buddha's feet and pleaded for pardon. It is rightly said by a famous saint that God dwells in that heart in which there is compassion, forgiveness and peace

TWO ATTITUDES

There are two ways of looking at this question Somebody may do us harm and we know that that harm has been done to us by that party out of ignorance Ignorance is no crime It is more to be pitied than condemned So the wise man does not take heed of the harm done to him but freely forgives the person who did him wrong But there is one thing about it The person who was harmed recognises the evil done to him and then forgives him without a thought of retaliation or feeling sour about it That is one way

The other way is that he, the injured one, does not recognise at all any injury or harm done to him and feels that he has nothing to forgive Suppose in a repentant mood the offender comes to the person and says "I did so much harm to you and still you are kind and compassionate to me However, do forgive me" What does the other man reply? He simply says: 'You have done me no harm at all I have therefore nothing to

forgive.' This is the real love that does not see any evil in anybody, or any wrong done. It is like the love of a doting mother, who does not see any defect in her son, however badly he may treat her. If people tell her: "Look here, your son is so cruel and bad to you. His conduct deserves to be condemned,' the mother takes no time to exclaim: 'No no, my son is never bad. Don't speak of him in that manner.' Love sees no faults, condones and forgives everything, it is not a question of forgiving after knowing that some wrong has been done to you, it is never feeling that any wrong has been done to you. Love is so glorious. So, saints are all kindness and forgiveness, even to the worst of their persecutors, as their hearts are free from hate, malice and wrath. Their life is so pure, holy and illumined that by their very presence, they spread a splendour of an all-enveloping divine radiance, uplifting all souls that come within its purview. Their very looks transform the people on whom they are cast. In Sanskrit, such a glance is called Kripa-drishti, — the look of grace. Saints never see evil. They condemn not, for their hearts are pure. Their entire life is a blessing to humanity. They are the real redeemers or saviours who bring light and joy to the world.

BEAUTY, CHARACTER AND LOVE

Q. Do you consider that thoughts such as love of beauty are necessary for spiritual progress?

Ramdas: Love of beauty does not mean merely love of the external appearance. It is love of goodness and virtue in a person's nature. Is it not so? We love Buddha, Krishna and Christ, because of their glorious and beautiful qualities. They were at once beautiful in person, at heart and in all their actions. Because of this, we adore them and as a result we are elevated, illumined, made to rise beyond our lower nature and attain perfect purity, enlightenment and bliss.

Ramdas can tell you from his own experience. The very thought of Buddha made his mind perfectly pure, his splendid figure with his serene face came before him and he was filled with ineffable peace. When Ramdas speaks of beauty, he does not mean merely physical beauty. There may be people physically handsome, but not so in their character, and these do not attract us. Should they attract us, we shall be only dragged down, instead of being raised up. Beauty really consists in the

lofty character of a person 'Handsome is that handsome does'

But we must remember that ultimately our love should go to all alike, whether they appear externally attractive or not, or are internally good or evil because we are then not concerned with either appearances or character Our vision is for the Spirit that pervades everywhere, residing in the hearts of all beings We love everybody because we love our own Self, — with a capital S — in those forms Whom do we normally love most? Our little self In the physical consciousness we feel we are only a body But when we know we are dwelling everywhere, as the omnipresent Spirit, we love every one with a higher vision born of the realisation of the Self which is the same as the Self of all beings and creatures In that sense, we love ourselves in and as these beings

FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE IMPERSONAL

Now, Ramdas is going to tell you how to sublimate the little self and attain universal consciousness Krishna, Buddha and Christ were the three great personalities who inspired Ramdas during his Sadhana period First, he had Krishna's vision, in Mangalore After a year, he had the vision of Buddha in a cave in Mangalore Some years later, he had the vision of Christ in the Himalayas These spiritual masters used mysteriously to guide and protect him when he was traversing the strenuous path in quest of God What glorious beings they are! When we meditate on them we grow into their likeness When we surrender ourselves to them, we become their very embodiments Krishna and Christ are not merely personal incarnations, but they are the Impersonal, Infinite Consciousness

GOD AS LOVE DWELLS IN US

Q Please tell us how to love God

Ramdas Truth to speak, it is not that we have to love God, but it is to know that God who is love is seated in our hearts By surrendering ourselves to this great love in us, we become the embodiments of that love By constant remembrance and meditation, as we realise His presence within us, our life becomes pure and illumined with His power and love Now, love radiates through us, we see with love, give with love, receive with love, walk and act in all manner of ways with nothing but love We become the very images of love

God is impersonal in His formless aspect, but in His personal or manifest aspect He is Love The whole universe we behold as an expression of His love Our identity with Him as the all-pervading Truth makes us love all beings and creatures in the world Verily, every particle of the universe is love's own expression Therefore, we have not to love Him, but to realise Him in our hearts so that His glory, love, power and light may be revealed in us and through us When we are filled with His love we feel every atom of our physical frame vibrating to the rhythm of love Now our joy knows no bounds When our hearts are dry, and do not respond to this sweetest emotion of love, we can never know what true joy and peace is Hence, we are asked to think of God — the Supreme Being — in our own hearts We are not to pray to Him as a Being far away from us By prayer and surrender to Him, we attain a purity not of the relative type but of the absolute Now your mind is perfectly free from guile, hate and desire, because it is saturated with divine love, light and joy.

SAMA DARSHAN

God has been defined in all religions as Absolute Peace Love is the child of Peace Men who do not believe in God live an arid drab life which is not leavened with the essence of love whereas, when love is revealed in us, it pours out of us in a stream inundating the whole universe, and we are blest with the vision of seeing everywhere none but our hearts' Beloved This supreme vision has been held out as the greatest attainment by all saints and sages of the world Though they act and talk in terms of duality, yet, at the back of it all they have the luminous realisation of the oneness of all existence, gained by recognising God as the very image of Love

Hate and ill-will have no place in your heart when you attain this state You feel strangely friendly towards all beings with whom you come in contact, which is not the physical relationship, but an inner kinship, — the kinship of the Spirit You are usually attached only to your relations on the physical plane. But, the superior and the real way is to love all beings equally, on the basis of the kinship of the Divine within us You love everybody irrespective of any distinction on the surface You transcend the physical you dwell in the spiritual in which there

is oneness, unity and equality In Sanskrit, you have a word for this state which is 'Samata' or 'Sama-darshan' Now your soul, which is one with the Oversoul, vibrates to the symphony of the Cosmic music and you are a serene, calm and luminous Being

GOD AND HIS POWER ARE ONE

God and His power means God and His love They are one, just as the sun and his rays are They are not distinct from each other Therefore we say, God is Love One cannot exist without the other. They are two aspects of the same Truth God is formless, but saints are the incarnations of God as love Since He is all-pervading, He has also assumed the form of the Universe Wherever we look, it is He, — up, down, this side and that, — it is He alone who dwells and permeates everywhere and everyone

For Ramdas, wherever he looks, he sees the Divine nothing but the Divine He lives, moves and has his being in the Divine, all the twenty-four hours, without break This is all due to God's infinite grace After he attained this grand experience, whoever meets him loves him and gets peace in his presence That is so because Ramdas beholds in all only the Divine, and the Divine therefore reveals Himself in them The Divine is peace and joy So they experience peace and joy which lie hidden in their own hearts Just as in the presence of the sun the lotus bud blossoms, so, in the presence of saints your heart blooms, bringing out all the beauty and fragrance which fills your body, mind and soul

Therefore a saint's company is essential to awaken the latent joy, peace and love within us These are ever in the heart of everyone Somehow, there is a veil cast over it This veil is lifted in the presence of a saint The divine light which he radiates dispels the darkness of the heart Your heart is touched and it melts, your eyes become moist, love overflows You are immersed in an ocean of joy The impact illumines, enraptures and thrills your entire being and you feel that you are raised beyond time and space The consciousness of the world, home and relations leaves you You are saturated and enveloped by an indescribable ecstasy This is simply wonderful !

HUMAN LIFE IS A PRECIOUS GIFT

When Ramdas got this vision and experience, he felt the urge to tell everybody about it so that all can bathe in that joy. So he went about from place to place in India, exhorting all whom he saw: "Life is dry and futile if it is not lived for God-realisation. Human life is a precious gift from God. It is our great good luck that we are not born as animals. God has given us a human body, an intellect to think, and a voice to talk and other faculties and powers for attaining Him. If we fritter away this precious life in the pursuit of transitory pleasures, we make our life a hot-bed of cares, fears and miseries. So, we should think of God, resign ourselves to Him and, becoming one with Him, love all humanity, knowing that humanity is the expression of our own Self."

Ramdas has a great fascination for these terms: universal vision, universal love, universal service and universal peace. When Ramdas went to Bombay from the Ashram on his way to Europe, friends asked him what the purpose of his going to the West was. Ramdas told them that he was going there to talk about universal love and service, and that he would mingle with all people who come in contact with him as one of them, love them all looking upon them as the very forms of God to whom he has dedicated his entire life. For an all-round transformation of our life into the divine, three things are essential. They are pure knowledge, love and action, pure knowledge that makes us realise that we are immortal, pure love that flows out to all beings and creatures on the earth without any distinction, and pure action that is service universal — that is, service of those who are in trouble, distress and sorrow.

LOVE AND SERVICE

Love, when it enters the heart, cannot but express itself through service. Love that does not translate itself into service in action is no love. That is the fulfilment of love. Therefore, universal love and service go together. They are the outcome of the universal vision which, in its turn, is born of the realisation of the Divine within you. In this state, all your actions have their inception in the universal Truth. Think of God and act. Then your life flows spontaneously. It will be a life lived for the good and welfare of all. It will create an atmosphere of light and joy wherever you go, and dispel the clouds of hate,

discord and war You should become a dynamic power for good If all of you release such a power, where is the question of war? Will there be fear of war then? There will not be another war, — certainly not War clouds may appear, but they will disperse and you will have a clear sky

ACT FROM THE UNIVERSAL STANDPOINT

Therefore, you must speak and act from the universal viewpoint, founded upon a realisation of your oneness with the Great Spirit, the source of all creation When you have attained peace within you, you cannot but spread it everywhere Whoever comes in contact with you must surely be converted into a man of peace Mutual love and service will automatically follow, for one man will look upon another, not with the eye of separateness but with the eye of oneness You will then have a happy and blissful world

So, love should be our pole-star Love should be our guide, — love, not individual but universal Love for the individual is not love, it is attachment In Sanskrit, there are two words 'Prem' and 'Moha' Moha means attachment to the world, to external forms, while Prem means love of the Spirit We should love, not merely for the sake of the body but for the sake of the Spirit within This Supreme Spirit is the same everywhere and in all beings, whether they be strangers, relations, friends or enemies Moha or attachment means swimming in a small pool of egoistic life, whereas Prem or love means swimming in the vast and limitless ocean of life

GOPIS' LOVE FOR KRISHNA

Q Could you tell us something about the love of the Gopis for Krishna?

Ramdas Gopis' love for Krishna is simply wonderful! It is difficult to find words to describe the nature of this love However, as you wish, Ramdas will attempt to tell you what that love is

Many people are mistaken in their belief that the love between Krishna and the Gopis is of an ordinary kind on the physical plane This is not so Their love is on the highest spiritual level When the Gopis merely thought of Him, they were lost in Him and were raised to such a state of ecstasy that, for the time being, they forgot their body and surroundings All

worldly inclinations, desires and thoughts were drowned in that ecstasy The physical pains and attachments to the nearest kith and kin were all obliterated Here is an instance

Once it happened that a Gopi asked her daughter-in-law to light a lamp in the house, getting fire from a neighbouring house In those days, there were no electric lights or even match boxes Fire was made by striking two pieces of flint or rubbing two pieces of wood against each other The daughter-in-law went with a cotton-wick soaked in oil to light it from the lamp at the neighbour's house She placed the wick on the fire when just at the moment, somebody said 'Krishna is at the door' Her eyes turned towards the door and she beheld Krishna standing there She was so struck by the sight of Krishna that she forgot herself and stood gazing at Him, oblivious of time and the fact that her hand was holding the wick over the fire The wick having taken fire was burning The flame was licking her fingers, but she was not aware of it She did not feel the pain, for she was unconscious of her body The mother-in-law, finding after a long wait that her daughter-in-law did not come, went to see what the matter was She saw her looking at Krishna, entranced and enchanted by His presence, although her fingers were burning!

That was the love of the Gopis for Krishna, their adored One Their love was of the purest and the holiest type Devotees reach this climax of love when they are utterly absorbed in their heart's beloved, God

Mirabai, the well-known saint of Marwar, is another shining example The very thought of Krishna would send her into a trance and she would get merged in Him Her ecstasies resulting from this union with her Lord were such that her eyes would pour down streams of tears Her face was radiant, her heart flooded with love and joy, and her body thrilled to the music of His flute

RADHA AND KRISHNA

No wonder, the hearts of Krishna's devotees should well up with a sweet emotion at the very thought of the Gopis' love for Him, which is so grand and sublime Sometimes, when there was a separation between Radha and Krishna and they were searching for each other with eager expectation, the Gopis who witnessed the scene would become miserable They would run

here and there to bring about a meeting between the two and the commotion in their hearts would cease only when they found them together again

You see what joy it is to have the company of Krishna who is Love Incarnate But, for the Gopis there was a still higher joy, and this joy they experienced when they brought together Radha and Krishna who were suffering the pangs of a long separation Everybody cannot understand the sublimity of this kind of Love This happens when you witness the meeting of two persons whom you equally love Such a sight gives you a rare joy, which you cannot get even when you are communing with either of them

Ramdas can very well realise what a rare joy it is to see two saints meet, for both of whom you have the highest affection and reverence When they are embracing each other out of pure love, and talk to one another in a most friendly spirit, you watch the scene with unfeigned joy and exaltation Ramdas once went to see Bhai Vir Singh, a Sikh saint Many friends who were with Ramdas at that time followed him to witness our meeting When we met and embraced each other ecstatically, those friends who looked on enjoyed unsurpassed delight So it was that the Gopis brought Radha and Krishna together, and when they saw the meeting, they went into ecstasies

SIX KINDS OF BHAKTI

In the Bhakti literature you will find a description of six kinds of Bhakti One is, looking at God as your Lord and worshipping Him as an image In such a devotion your heart is filled with the sweet emotion of love and you experience joy This was the Bhakti of Ambarisha, a devotee of Lord Vishnu This is called Shanta-Bhakti The second is Dasya-Bhakti Hanuman found joy in serving God, looking upon Him as his Master Hanuman was a true servant, obeying Him in every respect as his whole life was spent in the service of his Master Rama Here service itself is joy The third is Sakhya-Bhakti, in which you become a friend of God Here the devotee talks and moves with Him on equal terms, as Arjuna did with Krishna They used to sit, eat, talk and walk together as intimate friends We can have this kind of relationship with God Then comes the fourth, Vatsalya-Bhakti In this Bhakti, you look upon God as your child, as Yashoda did in relation to Krishna In the practice of this de-

votion, you serve feed and look after God generally as a mother does in the case of her child

The fifth is Madhurya-Bhakti Here the relationship beween the devotee and God is sweet and loving beyond compare They feel one with each other, and still maintain a separateness for the sake of enjoying the bliss of the play of love between them This is oneness in separation and separation in oneness This was the relation between Radha and Krishna This Bhakti is also called Prema-Bhakti

GOPI BHAKTI THE HIGHEST TYPE

The sixth and last is Sakhi-Bhakti, or Gopi-Bhakti This is rightly taken to be the highest form of Bhakti Whenever Radha and Krishna, after a long separation, were brought together by the efforts of the Gopis, they used to identify themselves alternately with Radha and Krishna and enjoy the bliss resulting from the meeting, and also feel immense delight by being merely witnesses to their beatific reunion This is rightly considered the acme to which Bhakti leads the soul

Kabir, a well-known saint of India, was a great devotee of Rama Even today, although he lived hundreds of years ago, he is held in high respect by the lovers of God In those days, some ardent admirers of his went to him and praised him for his great devotion to God Then, Kabir said "You do not know Gopi's love If you had known, you would not have talked so highly of my poor devotion to Him To tell you the truth, in the stream of one Gopi's love for Krishna, you will see thousands of Kabirs flowing"

Really, there is no comparison to Gopi's love Gopi's love stands alone, above every other kind of devotion When Krishna left Brindavan and went to Mathura, the agony of the Gopis was very great Krishna, coming to know of it, sent Uddhava, his friend to console them When the Gopis saw Uddhava, they crowded round him and asked 'How is our Krishna? Where is He? Is He coming?'

Uddhava said "Krishna has sent me to give you some advice as to how you can realise the Atman who is pervading everywhere and thereby know that you and Krishna who is Atman are one and that you have no reason to feel his separation Krishna is within you He is not merely a form, — He is your own Atman"

'WE DO NOT WANT YOUR PHILOSOPHY'

Listening to these words, the Gopis replied "We do not want your philosophy We are not at all interested in it We want Krishna the beautiful Being, whom we adore, love and worship Without Him we are utterly miserable Knowledge of the Atman, you can keep for yourself We will have nothing to do with it We will have Him alone our adored One"

Their hearts were aflame, their eyes were filled with tears and they were silent Uddhava departed Thereafter, whenever the Gopis saw the clouds, they were reminded of Krishna, who was of blue colour, and they would go into trances So it happened with them when they found themselves in the midst of groves of trees, or on the banks of the Jumna The very thought of Krishna drove them crazy and they were immersed in grief and joy at once That was the nature of the love which they bore for Krishna Sometimes they would see Him in His beautiful form everywhere

Once it happened that the great saint Narada, who is said to be wandering in all the three worlds, went to Brindavan to see Krishna He asked someone where he could find Krishna and was told 'I do not know where He is, but you may be able to see Him in the house of one of the Gopis' Narada accordingly entered the house of a Gopi and, finding Krishna there, asked 'How is it you are here?' Krishna said 'I am everywhere, not only here' 'Are you sure?' asked Narada 'Sure, everywhere,' replied Krishna To test the truth of this statement, Narada went to another Gopi's house Krishna was there Again to another, — Krishna was there also In every Gopi's house there was a Krishna, and Narada was astonished

Krishna has said 'Wherever I am loved, there I am' So He can be with us if we love Him We can feel His presence, we can see Him in our hearts, we can behold Him with our eyes provided we give our hearts to Him, in the same way as the Gopis did Remember what they told Uddhava 'We do not want Jnana — or the knowledge of the Self — all we want is Krishna, the Supreme Person, boy Krishna who charms us, plays with us and enchants us by the sweet music of His flute and thrills us by His very presence'

Krishna is an Avatar of perfect love The word Krishna is derived from *Akarshana* which means attraction So the name

itself signifies that Krishna is the Supreme Truth, manifest in human form, to attract the whole world towards Him That is Krishna!

HOW LOVE EXPANDS

Q Should the love that grows in us go first to those who are nearest to us, such as our father, mother, wife and children?

Ramdas That is the way love expands It is narrow in the beginning, but gradually spreads out enveloping the entire universe The example is given of a stone thrown into a pool of water There will be rings formed round the spot the stone touches, gradually enlarging, until they reach the bank of the pool and get lost

This kind of spiritual progress may be possible only in the process of self-purification, in the steady and gradual eradication of all desires from the mind When you come to a certain point of the so-called expansion of your love and vision, it undergoes a sudden and lightning change into the Universal Consciousness It is Jiva realising that it is Brahman Jiva is the individual soul As soon as the ignorance which has obsessed the soul is removed, that instant it realises that it is the Supreme Spirit In regard to this transformation, there are no intermediary stages The stages are only, Ramdas repeats, in the process of self-purification which helps to break the barriers between us and God and grants us the knowledge that we are one with Him

It is said that love which is first centred in ourselves must expand gradually towards, say, our mother, father, wife, children, then towards the community, towards the nation, towards the world and ultimately towards the whole universe This evolution from the individual to the universal is a fascinating idea It is all true in lower levels of consciousness but when the grace of the Divine descends on us, in the twinkling of an eye man stands revealed as God Himself

This integral transformation brings a flood of illumination which permeates every part of the being Our love now is for all alike Humanity is our God, nay the world is our God The distinctions based on nationality, race, caste, creed and colour disappear totally It is like the darkness vanishing at the approach of the sun The light of knowledge dawning in our hearts dispels the darkness of ignorance, and we in an instant

know that we are the Atman — the Universal Spirit — and not a Jiva, — the individual soul Sri Ramakrishna gave an apt illustration 'There may be darkness in a cave for thousands of years, but the moment you strike a match inside it, the darkness goes and light illumines the space'

GIVE LOVE FOR HATE

Q One practical instance, Swamiji If in a circle of relations, there is somebody whom we feel we cannot love, somebody who is very antagonistic to us, and we are very much tempted to hate him in return, should we give considerable attention to it, or should we put the problem aside and let that point find a solution for itself? This is very common in Europe, — we are not able to maintain close relationship with father, mother, wife and so on

Ramdas We need not give individual attention to that problem, but we must try to purify our hearts so that our attitude towards that person, as also towards others, may be one of pure and spontaneous love We must take this opposition or antagonism as an opportunity for our self-purification and for drawing our mind within In fact, our feeling of dislike for others is not because of any fault in them, but because of the impurity in us If we become absolutely pure, we can convert an enemy into a friend There is a saying of a saint of India 'When your mind becomes pure, your enemy becomes your friend'

Thus, you elevate yourself and also elevate the other party You must not judge such persons, but love them with all your heart and treat them with kindness and live with them in all patience, understanding that they are so behaving with you out of ignorance Instead of condemning them, you should feel compassion for them Individually we have to bear up everything, however unpleasant, that comes to us from anyone opposed to us and take it that God sends these troubles to raise us beyond the pairs of opposites, so that we can remain calm and unaffected in all situations This attitude does change in a mysterious way the heart of the person who is opposed to us

There were instances in Ramdas' life of people having come to him to do him harm, but when he saw them, he greeted them with a smiling face and at once their hearts changed from enmity to love and friendship This is natural If we are misunder-

Ramdas: When there is no beauty in the seer, he sees ugliness The artist is one who does his work in a state of inspiration His production has the charm of beauty in it So, we have to see his work with the eye of the artist A good man is hated by some people who cannot appreciate his goodness That is because they have no goodness in them The example of the Kings Yudhishtira and Duryodhana holds good here Whatever you see in the light of a divine realisation is for you an object of beauty Real beauty is within you When you are aware of this, your nature, appearance and all actions become beautiful

Any work of art that raises in your heart the sweet emotions of love and devotion is most inspiring There are images carved by great artists out of adoration for their favourite deity, of which the images are symbols They fill your heart with inspiration light and ecstasy Some people who have not the sense of spiritual beauty do not feel any response from the heart when they see such images, for they are undeveloped in their spiritual nature

You know, Gandhiji was a man of God He never hurt a soul, he was kind and loving towards all He had an extraordinary feeling of forgiveness towards those who injured and persecuted him When people quarrelled with one another, or when he saw anybody in distress, his heart ached and bled Such a man was shot and killed The man who killed him declared that he saw evil in Gandhiji The evil was really in the assassin and not in Gandhiji Similarly, Jesus was crucified by those who hated Him They saw evil in Him, while He was the personification of all goodness True is the saying: 'To recognise greatness, we must be great ourselves' A good man alone can recognise goodness in another

GET MANTRA FROM THE GURU

Q By repeating the Mantra taken from a book, is it possible to achieve the same results as Ramdas achieved by repeating the Mantra given by his Guru?

Ramdas There is a great difference between taking a Mantra from a book and taking it from a Guru Just before Ramdas received the Mantra from his Guru, he was repeating 'Ram, Ram' day and night But, his mind was not brought fully under control by such repetition He used to have some moments of peace, but not absolute peace which he was aiming

at One day, his father came to him and gave him the Ram Mantra — Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram This was done by him of his own accord, without Ramdas asking for it He assured Ramdas that by repeating this Mantra, Ramdas would attain everlasting joy So, thereafter, instead of repeating simply 'Ram, Ram', Ramdas started chanting to himself the Mantra given by the Guru He found within a short time that his mind became perfectly calm and peaceful He made out that this was due to the power which the Guru had infused into the Mantra when it was given

The Guru transmits through the Mantra his spiritual power into his disciple When you take the Mantra from a book, you deny yourself the help that you get from the Guru Guru initiates you into the Mantra with a heart full of love and affection for you It is like your helping yourself with food and the same being served to you by your loving mother When a loving personality like your Guru gives you the Mantra, saying that you will realise immortal peace and joy by repeating it, the power of the Mantra should indeed be extraordinary Even in ordinary life, anything given to us with love elates us so much How much more should we be elated in the spiritual life when the Guru, with his blessing, gives us the Mantra that saves us from the bondage of life and brings us face to face with God!

GURU'S LOVE GREATER THAN MOTHER'S

Ramdas has compared the Guru with the mother Mother, of course, loves her child, but the Guru's love is infinitely greater than that of the mother Initiation from him gives a new birth to you While a mother gives you physical birth, the Guru gives you spiritual birth, — a birth in which you realise eternal peace and bliss

When Ramdas received the Mantra from the Guru, he felt very secure as he was inwardly assured that the Guru had taken the whole burden of his life on him and that the responsibility of seeing that Ramdas did not either fall or deviate from the path rested with the Guru The all-protecting hand of the Guru was ever over him Guru is considered to be a guard ever at your back As a mother's care is essential for the baby, so a Guru's care is essential for a spiritually re-born disciple One word about the Guru, and that is Guru and God are one

Q: Is receiving a Mantra from a saint the most powerful way of receiving influence from the saint?

Ramdas Certainly, influence goes with the Mantra

GURU NEVER DIES

Q My problem is that the person whom I looked to for help is no longer on this earth I am going into a monastery shortly as I want to develop spiritually I want to know who can give me a Mantra

Ramdas: Has your Guru not given you any Mantra?

Q He was dead already.

Ramdas The Guru is never dead When you want initiation and receive it from any saint, you must take it that your Guru has come in that form to give you initiation Guru and the saint from whom you receive the Mantra are not different. Guru is one and eternal He never dies

GURU THE GIVER OF LIGHT

Q. Do you say Guru is God?

Ramdas The meaning of the word 'Guru' is 'Dispeller of Darkness' or 'Giver of Light' Guru is the incarnation of God who has come on earth to liberate souls from darkness and bring them light Guru is an awakener and saviour.

Q Can a Guru refuse a Mantra to someone who asks for it?

Ramdas: Guru can refuse when he finds that the aspirant is not really keen on the quest of Truth He may deny it to him for a time, but when that person comes another time with an intense longing, he may accept him as a disciple and give him the Mantra But cases of refusal are very rare Guru is all compassion

Q. Can a Guru be asked to give a particular way of training if the aspirant feels it is necessary for his spiritual progress?

Ramdas The Guru knows better than the aspirant, and will do what is best for him

ACCEPTANCE REMOVES ALL DOUBTS

Q When one has a Guru, should he go to him with all questions or problems, or is it sufficient merely to think of him and the problems are solved?

Ramdas: Acceptance of the Guru by itself means removal of all doubts When there are doubts, it means that the disciple

has not really accepted the Guru After Ramdas accepted his own father as Guru and took the Mantra, he had no doubts. After initiation, he got contact with many saints, but he had no questions to ask of them, because he had no doubts

When the Guru has enjoined upon you to remember God constantly by repeating the Mantra, you have simply to follow his advice What is the good of raising doubts and questions when you have not put into practice the initial advice the Guru gave you? Let us first do what he has told us to do That is our duty If only we sincerely follow him, all our doubts will automatically disappear Otherwise, when one doubt is cleared, another doubt takes its place and there will be no end to that process The best thing, therefore, would be to be silent before the Guru and receive his Grace, which will calm the waves of your mind and make it still What you want is spiritual strength, light and peace By questioning you cannot get these You will only be churning the mind, which is like churning water. By churning water you cannot get any butter, just as by pounding husk you cannot get any grain

'WHO IS A GURU ?

Q. How can we know who is a real Guru? What happens if a man who has not realised God tries to guide another?

Ramdas: It would be like a blind man leading another blind man, with the risk of both falling into a pit The Guru must be able to impart spiritual power to another, and one who has not found the Truth will not be able to do this When one has nothing to give, how can he give anything? A beggar cannot be a giver In what way will an aspirant be benefited by such a Guru?

To be a Guru is no joke He must have the strength or capacity to bear the entire responsibility of his disciple, to protect him in every way When the disciple is in danger, a mere thought of the Guru who may be thousands of miles away is enough to ward it off Suppose you are under a most alluring temptation, here again, a mere remembrance of the Guru will give you the necessary strength and courage to resist it Guru should be a God-realised saint and the disciple should be one who has implicit trust in him

Here is an instance taken from the life of a great saint, Sri Siddharudha, who lived in an Ashram at Hubli On one occa-

sion, some of his devotees were travelling from a long distance in order to see him They had to pass through a dense forest. When they were walking through the forest, a huge tiger made its appearance and stood in their path Naturally, the party got thoroughly frightened They remembered and prayed to the great Swami, their Guru What followed may seem strange to many Suddenly they saw Sri Siddharudha standing near the tiger, with his hands on its back, and asking them to pass on The Guru came in person to protect them After covering some distance, they looked back The saint had vanished, the tiger had retired to the jungle, and they were safe This story was narrated by them on reaching the Ashram to several devotees there, and from them Ramdas came to know of it There are many such instances in the lives of saints

GURU THE SAVIOUR

This is so far as protection from physical perils is concerned The Guru also becomes your saviour spiritually and morally There was a devotee sojourning in Japan, many years ago. and his Guru was in India One night, he happened to be in a peculiarly unfavourable environment in which a moral fall seemed to be inevitable The temptation was very strong The devotee who was an earnest disciple of his Guru, and whose faith in him was unusually firm, remembered his Guru in India, with the result that he came out safe from that severe ordeal He confessed the circumstances to the Guru in person, after returning to India He said a mere thought of the Guru in that distant land had filled him with a rare light and power which enabled him to resist the temptation

The Guru is an invaluable help to you in your meditation You sit for meditation and you find your mind is restless and difficult to control The moment you bring in the thought of your Guru,— the all-pervading impersonal Reality, manifest in human form, — your mind becomes calm, settled and serene You are bathed in a sea of peace Such is the influence of the Guru on the disciple who has taken complete refuge in him

GURUS, PAST AND PRESENT

Q If one has no opportunity to find a Guru, can one adopt a Guru from among the saints of the past?

Ramdas If a person is earnestly desiring to have a Guru he

can have him Till then he can pin his faith on some past saint and look upon him as his Guru There is no objection to this Later, should the aspirant meet a saint and wish to be initiated by him, he should take him as an embodiment of that Guru and be guided by him All saints are one, all Gurus are one

Q If one accepts a Guru who gives instructions by mail and teaches a certain kind of yoga and then one gets instructions orally from another saint who follows a different line of Yoga, will it not lead to a certain amount of confusion?

Ramdas It does cause confusion He must be true to the Guru who has been guiding him all along

THE GURU IS WITHIN YOU

Q If the Guru who gives instructions in writing has given a Mantra in writing to all his disciples collectively, can that be considered as a Mantra received individually?

Ramdas It must be taken as individual initiation, even though the Mantra is sent by post to his disciples collectively As you advance on the path, guided by your Guru from outside, a stage is reached when the Guru guides you from within You feel the Guru within, and the sooner you reach this stage the better for you There is no use depending always on instructions conveyed to you externally The aim of the Guru is to help you to realise Him in your heart When you have found Him within, then external guidance stops In Ramdas' case, after giving him initiation, the Guru has been watching and guiding him from within All his spiritual disciplines were gone through according to the promptings he was receiving from time to time from the Guru enshrined in his heart You should not hang on to the Guru externally for ever

You should pray to Him to give you inner light and make you aware of the Divine Presence within you The inspiration you get from Him is called intuition It is verily God working in and through you It is the inner voice that directs and controls you This is the state of Jivanmukti You are now safe and are led on the path of righteousness and thereby you become a blessing to humanity

GURU IS NECESSARY

Q So, a Guru is necessary in any case?

Ramdas Yes Just as in the learning of arts and sciences

you require a professor under whom you can study, and after you have mastered a subject you yourself become a professor and teach others, so also, for studying the spiritual science you should have a spiritually illumined personality for teaching you and helping you in all your discipline, until you grow up to his likeness and become an experienced spiritual guide to others, which means you share with others the glory, power and joy of your realisation

Guru is an incarnation of God,—God Himself in human form, whose mission is to bring people who have gone astray, back to the right path This is the work of the prophets, incarnations, great teachers and spiritual masters who appear on this earth from age to age.

GENEVA,
24th August 1954.

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

STRUGGLE AND SURRENDER

We know that it is only by surrendering ourselves to God that we can realise Him. It is not directly by our struggle we get His vision, but only by His grace Our struggle leads us to the knowledge that by struggle we cannot get Him This statement may appear to be strange to many people who believe that without their effort God cannot be realised But that is not so Our Sadhana makes us realise that by Sadhana alone we cannot attain Him. When we feel utterly helpless, and look to Him as our helper, then He comes to our rescue Our struggle and effort must cease There should be total elimination of the ego-sense before we can experience the Divine Presence

Now our mind is calm and serene, resting as it were on the bosom of the Lord, as we have given ourselves over to Him completely We become His in every aspect of our being, — in body, senses and mind His grace has descended into us, and we are enlightened with the knowledge of the Divine

For achieving anything, even the objects of the world, we have to strive hard, and it is at the end of the struggle we obtain the desired object So, when we try to realise and see God, we strive hard and at a certain stage give up the effort and completely rely on Him Now we know that we are nothing and He is everything, and that anything is possible only by His grace It is like churning curds for getting butter After churning, you have to wait for a while before the butter is formed Likewise is the case with the spiritual aspirant who, by resigning himself to God, reaches the goal When we make God's Will our will, and make God our all-in-all, He takes us under His wings and finally we are absorbed in His resplendent Being

GOD PLAYS THE DUAL PART

Thereafter, we become like children, — innocent, pure and simple, — and get filled with true joy and peace Purity becomes natural to us When our entire being is saturated with divine

bliss and radiance, we dwell always in union with God,—a state of non-dual consciousness, free from all desires. Our life reflects only the glory and power of God. We enjoy ineffable bliss and peace. We feel one with all beings. We are illumined beings, one with God. We still maintain the position of His children and servants. Really, God is His own servant and His own Master, His own child and His own Mother. It is the one Supreme Being, playing the dual parts.

God is ever after us. He wants to take us to Himself and grant us the highest beatitude. What we do is, we try to escape Him, just as the dirty child sought after by the mother for a bath, runs away from her out of obstinacy and does not allow itself to be caught. It does not know the benefit of cleanliness. So also, we are escaping from the Divine Mother who tries to catch us, purify us and grant us the highest bliss. We play with the toys of the world so much so that we cannot listen to the call of the Mother. We are not willing to submit to Her. We are ignorant children and do not know what is good for us, and thus we suffer. The Mother is ever within us, watching over us, and still we do not seek Her guidance. We are immersed in momentary pleasures of life. We are scared, anxious and restless. If we want peace, we ought to take refuge in Her. We must be submissive and obedient to Her. It is then only that She reveals Herself within us.

PATH OF THE STRONG

Some would have it that this is the path of a weakling. Ramdas says it is the path of the strong. This path leads one directly to God. It is a straight, simple and easy path, suitable for all persons in all grades, ages and conditions of life. Surrender is not an easy thing. But there is no other way by which we can eradicate the ego-sense.

It is well for a person to sit in silent meditation and identify himself with the all-pervading Spirit. But, when he comes to activity on the physical plane, he loses his balance and feels handicapped. For, the senses drag him down, likes and dislikes again seize him and he becomes a frantic creature, subject to the attacks of passions and temptations. The peace he had gained in meditation now evaporates.

On the other hand, when we surrender ourselves to the Divine totally, and behold Him not only within us but also as the

entire world-manifestation, it is then that our life will be in tune with God in all states and conditions of life The peace eternal will be ever with us, unshaken and undisturbed by the external impact of persons and environments Our relationship with the world will be one of pure love, because for us the Divine is everywhere

REGAIN THE LOST CHILDHOOD

So it comes to this, that we should regain our lost childhood When we were children we were innocent But there was in us a seed of ignorance which grew as we grew and, over-powering us, cast away our innocent nature and led us astray We were thereafter caught in the toils of desire and action and we move in a vicious circle of transitory pleasures and pains It is necessary that we should hand overselves over to the Divine and through His grace burn up this seed which is the cause of our misery and bondage, and regain our lost childhood When once we get it back, it cannot be taken away from us The burnt seed does not germinate We will remain pure children all our life

STORY OF ADAM AND EVE

The story of Adam and Eve is appropriate here Adam was innocent, free and joyful Ignorance, which was in the form of a seed in him, developed and subdued him He lost his innocent, pure and divine nature He was caught in a net of worldly desires and was involved in the play of duality The play went on for ages, ignorance doing its work of sin and havoc God came at last, assuming a human form, as Jesus Christ, in whom the lost childhood was reclaimed He is a great example to us all Jesus came to the world to show us how a man can regain his lost innocence

Sufism also believes in the great spiritual leaders of all religions and accepts their teachings Sufism embodies the teachings of Prophet Mohammed imparted to his followers of the inner circle He taught them about the unity of the soul with God For attaining this mystic experience, only a few were entitled and they were given the Light Verily, when the soul is divested of its ignorance, it is God Himself The Sufi saint, Mansur, declares "Anal Huq"—I am God—meaning that, when the veil of ignorance that covers the soul is removed, the soul reveals itself as God

PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Prayer is a most potent means for communing with God and thereby drawing upon Him for the needed strength and grace We know that certain acts we do are wrong, but still we persist in doing them This shows that our mind is weak and cannot resist temptations The power for gaining mastery over the mind can come to us only by communion with God, who is the source of all power. Through contact with Him, and by means of prayer, we are filled with His light which frees us from all human weaknesses

MEANS TO MIND CONTROL

Now, with this help, what are the principles we should practise in order to achieve perfect control over the mind and attain liberation and peace?

One Satya or Truth —Always speak the truth, — never tell a lie

Two Ahimsa or Non-injury. Here, it is not merely physical violence that has to be eschewed, but also wishing ill of another We should practise non-violence in thought, word and deed

Three Asteya or Non-stealing Here, again, stealing is not merely a physical act; even desiring to have for oneself something which belongs to another, constitutes stealth Man is prone to feel envious when another gets some material gain He wishes he might have had it, instead of the other person On the other hand, we must rejoice in the good fortune of others, as if we ourselves had got it

Four. Aparigraha or Sense of Non-possession It means, refusal to possess anything or having possessions, without being attached to them It also means that when anything is lost, you should not be worried about it You simply say. 'It went back to the place wherefrom it came', or 'God gave and God took away' So long as the objects are with you, you keep them in the right way, without attachment to them Remember that you did not bring anything with you when you came into the world, and you cannot take anything with you when you leave it So, nothing really belongs to us Why, then, should we, in this short span of life, get attached to things and persons and cry over them when they are lost or leave us?

Five· Brahmacharya or Living in Brahman Brahmacharya does not merely mean celibacy or continence It means esta-

blishing onself in Brahman, acting and living in Brahman Brahman means God, who dwells in our heart. He is the basis of the world manifestation He is the substratum and support of all that exists To realise this blessed state, the sex desire should be completely extinct You are one with Universal Consciousness, which does not admit of a sense of duality or separation Everywhere it is Brahman for you Brahman is sexless When you know you are this Brahman, then, where is the difference between you and others? It is all Brahman

We must try to put into practice these five principles For success in this, God's grace is essential Knowing, as we do, that acting up to these principles alone leads us towards God, we are yet unable to live up to them We feel weak and helpless As we walk on the path, we stumble and fall On such occasions, we should only pray to God in all humility. 'O God! Give me strength that I may walk on the path that takes me to You and overcome obstacles without any fall or mishap'

Prayer puts us in direct contact with God and from Him flow into us His power and joy which enable us to walk boldly on the path with unfaltering steps The power of prayer is therefore invincible The connection which we keep with God through prayer is a source of strength and courage, for triumphing over all impediments that stand in our way to final realisation

THE PROBLEM OF IGNORANCE

Q Where does this seed of ignorance come from? And why is it there?

Ramdas If we look at the problem of life from the standpoint of the Absolute, ignorance has no existence The seed that you speak of has no reality about it From the relative point of view alone, ignorance is there Why the seed of ignorance is in us even from the relative standpoint, is a mystery.

From the point of view of the Absolute, every being, everything, is Brahman Maya or ignorance, then, is nothing but a mask put on by the Divine for the sake of His play Really, He is ever free and unaffected But like a man acting on the stage, hiding behind his part his real personality, God plays on this world stage, assuming innumerable shapes and forms He puts on a variety of moods and masks and appears to be happy and miserable In His pristine existence, He is the all-pervading

unaffected Reality; He also remains as a witness, ever free and blissful The play is only on the surface

If we understand the question from this angle, ignorance proves to be a sheer myth All is Lila or play of God Here, Ramdas is reminded of the inspired words of William Shakespeare who makes the actor in his play 'As You Like It' utter these words.

'All the world's a stage,
And, all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and entrances . '

Now, coming again to the relative viewpoint, we can only say that no answer can be found to the question why there should be any ignorance at all Why can we not find an answer? It is because the range of our intellect is so limited that it cannot grasp the ways of God who is infinite The limited instrument, mind, cannot gauge the Limitless Therefore we say the existence of ignorance is a mystery The intellect can judge, understand and explain the objects on the relative plane, but cannot grasp the eternal Truth and Power which inspires and activates the intellect As an example we may mention the instance of a pair of tongs which can hold any object, but not the hand by which it is held

GURU IS EVER WITH THE DISCIPLE

Q When we pray intensely, can we get help from a Guru who is dead?

Ramdas The Guru may not be physically present, but he is always with the disciple who meditates on him and seeks his help Guru is not a body, but the Supreme Spirit, undying

Q· What is a prophet?

Ramdas Prophet, as Ramdas understands the term, is one who leads us to God He is an incarnation of God, come to the earth for the uplift of humanity But in the popular sense sometimes it is used to mean one who prophesies about the future The word has surely a deeper and more comprehensive meaning A Prophet is a representative or agent of God on earth, whose mission is to liberate man from the thraldom of ignorance and give him the light of God and get him His direct contact

JAPA YOGA

Q We would like to know the conditions to be fulfilled in

daily life to make Japa actually possible and effective

Ramdas The path through which God took this child to Himself was repetition of His Name, or Japa Yoga Yoga means union with God Union with Him is effective through continuous chanting of His holy Name In Ramdas's case, when he was repeating the Mantra, or the formula given to him by his Guru, he was concentrating upon the sound of the Name that he was uttering The sound of the Name bewitched the mind and the mind became still and serene, until at last the sound ceased As the mind dissolved into the super-conscious existence, he felt not only that God was in him, but that he was one with God

As we go on repeating the Name, we come to a stage at which we know that He and His Name are not different When we take the Name, we experience the ecstasy of our union with Him and are at once raised to a higher consciousness in which 'I-ness' ceases to exist There is now only God,—inside, outside and everywhere This is the culmination of all spiritual endeavour or Sadhana through Japa Japa by itself is an all-sufficient Sadhana, which can lead us to God and make us feel one with Him, enjoying perennial bliss When the goal is reached, Japa stops, having done its work Now the soul unites with the Oversoul or God

Since Japa should be done ceaselessly for realising God, God made Ramdas give up everything, all worldly activities, in order that he may devote all his time for Japa With this end in view, God made him reduce his food and sleep to the minimum In fact, for some months he had no sleep at all and he was on long periods of fasts But God's Name was running in his mind continuously He was taken to caves and jungles where he sat up night and day, chanting the Name and drinking its sweet nectar God is our Beloved and the Beloved's Name must necessarily be nectar to His devotee The sound of the Name at once attunes his heart to the Beloved and he is filled with the sweetness of the Name God and devotee become one, Guru and disciple become one That is what Japa does!

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS CANNOT HAMPER

Q How can an European best try to fulfil the conditions necessary for Japa Yoga, in the midst of all the confused life and activity in Europe?

Ramdas If we depend upon God, everything becomes possi-

ble. The conditions prevailing in Europe are more or less the same as those prevailing in other parts of the world It is not external conditions that deter us from trying to realise God, but our own mind. If the mind is averse to the practice of constantly remembering God, then the external circumstances seem to hamper us If the mind longs to realise God, and pines for His contact, the circumstances automatically prove to be conducive and helpful. Even difficulties that face us will become helpers in our path, provided our aspiration for God is very keen In a wonderful way, the very obstacles become our aids, and people around us will cooperate with us in our effort to reach Him. In strange and mysterious ways, God Himself provides us with all the things necessary for our spiritual progress

In his own case, Ramdas found that even the opposing forces ultimately turned favourable as his wish to realise God was very strong So, external factors do not matter The heart must be awakened to the need of God Lord Krishna gives the assurance that to those devotees who constantly remember and endeavour to reach Him, He will bring full security and peace The same assurance has been given by all the great Teachers of the different religions of the world You depend on Him and He will look after you What is needed is implicit faith in Him and His assurance By taking refuge in Him, we can achieve the impossible God becomes our helper and protector in every way, whether we are in India, Europe, America or in any other part of the world. Everywhere God is and we can feel His presence Wherever we are, if we are sincerely devoted to Him, if we are true and faithful to Him, external conditions and environments do not at all matter With the flame of aspiration burning bright in our heart, we shall surely have Him

GOD NEVER FORSAKES

It was Ramdas's experience that God in His own inscrutable way brought about changes in his life and took him to such places and gave him such contacts as would accelerate his progress towards Him Contacts with great souls kindle and intensify the desire for God This is true of all devotees, whether they are Indians, Europeans, Americans or any others Several such contacts Ramdas had in the course of his Sadhana Once you become a devotee of God, He never forsakes you In the Bhagavad Gita, we read Lord Krishna emphatically saying

न मे भक्त: प्रणश्यति । 'My devotee never perishes'

God is a living Reality. We ought to trust Him and our trust must be complete, steady and unshakable Doubts are our worst enemy In moments of crisis, our faith wavers We feel that God has forsaken us We are stricken with despair and frustration We forget that God is our Divine Mother. When we have once become His, there is no room for fear or doubt

BE PURE IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED

We are confronted with so many temptations in the world, that God's Grace alone can save us from a fall A moral background is necessary for spiritual progress Our life must be, like a fresh flower, fit to be offered at the feet of God When once you dedicate yourself to God, you have nothing to do with sensual pleasures They lead us astray from Him and bring us sorrow and grief So it is that we should be perfectly pure in thought, word and deed We must walk on the path of pure devotion and not deviate from it, until we reach the goal The goal is union with God whereby we become holy, blessed and illumined with the light of God It is only then that we may claim to have attained the best, noblest and highest aim of life

CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE POSSIBLE

Q Is it possible for a man to accomplish ceaseless Japa or remembrance in whatever occupation he may be engaged?

Ramdas It is possible if, during your leisure hours, you go on chanting the Name and keep your mind in tune with God Then you will develop in course of time a consciousness in which you cannot forget Him There will be in the mind always an under-current of God-remembrance In this condition you can do the work which you are to perform, having at the same time your heart with God Your actions now flow spontaneously, with your mind perfectly at peace Your work is beneficial to everybody and will bear the stamp of universality Thus constant repetition of God's Name develops into a steady and unbroken consciousness of God

RISE ABOVE THE BODY IDEA

God is not merely an individual entity, confined to temples, mosques and churches He is omnipresent He dwells in the hearts of us all To find Him within you, it would be well for you to retire for some time to a solitary spot for practising pray-

er and meditation There you can commune with Him undisturbed by the noises of the world Now you gradually rise above your body-idea and enjoy the bliss of union with Him God becomes your constant companion in whom you lose yourself and are raised to an ecstatic state that is past expression

A SELF-SUFFICIENT SADHANA

Q Is it possible that the Japa Yoga in itself can replace all other rites, so that one can do just that to the exclusion of all others?

Ramdas The object of all Sadhanas or practices is to maintain a continuous remembrance of God When Japa can do that, why should one do any other Sadhana or rite? Japa is an all-inclusive and all-sufficient practice by which you can be ever in tune with God and finally merge yourself in Him It is capable of taking you by itself to the highest goal of God-realisation

When Ramdas started on the spiritual path, as willed by God, his only practice was repetition of God's Name All other Sadhanas he did were only to enable him to have God's Name always on his lips There is a saying 'As you think, so you become' If you think of God, you become God Japa is thinking of God constantly, to the exclusion of everything else God-thought keeps away every other thought This thought also ultimately disappears and you realise your identity with God You have heard of the great Sufi saint, Mansur He was always uttering 'I am God, I am God' His individuality had dissolved in God and so he boldly declared that he was God Himself Brahma-jnanis among the Hindus say *Aham Brahmasmi*—'I am Brahman' This is not blasphemy Those who have realised alone know that the soul is God Himself

We have to disillusion ourselves We think we are individuals, made up of the body, senses and mind This is a mistake By constantly taking the Name of our Eternal Being,—God,—we realise we are He The Name that you are repeating is the Name of your Self, your own immortal life and existence

YOU CAN HEAR GOD

Q Does prayer lead to communion with God?

Ramdas Yes God hears when we pray to Him What are we without His power? In fact, without the words which He

puts into our mouth, how can we pray? If only we are conscious of this, our prayers will be immediately answered You can even hear Him talking to you God is within, but our ignorance is such that we neither see nor hear him Our eyes see only outside things and our ears hear only outside sounds

We can talk to God as we talk to our mother or friend He is so near us We can take His Name loudly or mentally, as we choose Both ways are efficacious If everybody in a house invokes God and holds Him close to his heart, it must produce a holy atmosphere conducive to the spiritual evolution of every member of the house

HOW SILENT JAPA WORKS

Q Is it better to do Japa silently?

Ramdas Japa done aloud will be taken up by the mind and the mind will thereafter repeat the Name When you chant God's Name attuned to a musical strain, the sweetness of it will charm the ear and your mind will easily get absorbed in the Name The Name will thus gradually arrest the thoughts that rise in the mind, and the mind will become still and tranquil

Just as a lump of sugar attracts ants to it, and as the ants, once they taste it, do not like to leave it, so also the mind, once it tastes the sweetness of the Name, will not give it up, but be enjoying it always Again, as the lump of sugar attracts the ants, the Name attracts the devotee's mind towards itself When the joy of the Name permeates the mind, it is no longer the mind, but divine consciousness having the nature of Brahman or God So, from external practice you go to internal practice.

HOW TO FIND THE GURU

Q How to choose a Guru?

Ramdas If, by the use of our intelligence alone, we try to find out whether a person can be accepted as Guru, our conclusion may not be right When we try to judge a saint with our measuring rod, we may mistake a great spiritual leader to be an ordinary man, incapable of guiding us Conversely, we may be led into the error of accepting an ordinary person as our Guru expecting him to guide us on the path The only way to find out a Guru who can save us is to go to a saint who is widely honoured, quietly sit at his feet and watch the result of his influence on us For our part, we should approach him with an

open mind and in all humility In his presence, should your mind bathe in a "peace that passeth all understanding", then you may be sure you have found the Guru

We cannot always judge a saint by his external ways and manners. Mostly, we will see in him the great qualities of equal vision, compassion for those who are in distress, and freedom from gusts of passion and anger We see him radiating light and peace to all who go to him His dominating influence turns us from the perishable to the eternal. Guru is a powerful personality He can guide and help us even from thousands of miles away His power is infinite He is God Himself.

What the Guru gives is not the ordinary wealth in the pursuit of which the majority of mankind is engaged But he grants you spiritual wealth which is imperishable, the wealth of the Spirit, the wealth of immortal bliss and peace When you become a true disciple of the Guru, you inherit all his spiritual riches. He is like a father to you Approach him like a child, and you will become eternally his; nay, you become he By Guru's contact, you are re-born in the Spirit By his association, you become like him, having the same vision as he,—the vision of the Self everywhere

GOD OF ALL RELIGIONS IS ONE

Q Is it possible for us Catholics to attain the same, by singing our songs?

Ramdas Certainly If you put your heart fully into the chanting of God's Name, in your own way, God would listen to you and take you to the highest spiritual eminence Ramdas has not come here to lead the people to adopt a particular faith, or to establish a new creed or cult, but to encourage you to follow your own path and, by faithfully following the path chalked out for you by your spiritual masters, reach the goal,—God—the one God of all religions and faiths

God is the one Divine Parent of us all There are many ways of approaching Him All the paths shown to us by great spiritual leaders lead us to the same universal God All Gurus are representatives of the one God, whether they be Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist Ours is to follow, in all zeal and sincerity, the path pointed out to us by our Guru We must be true to our spiritual master, and also treat with respect and reverence all the other saints of the world, to whatever religion they may

belong Ramdas, for one, looks upon all the saints of the world with the highest reverence, whether they be of the past or the present.

Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed and Zoroaster are all alike incarnations of God We have in our Ashram the photos and paintings of all sages and saints of the world. To see them is joy and inspiration Of course, we have not got the picture of Prophet Mohammed, but we remember Him reverently all the same

Ramdas' God and your God are not different He is really the same One seated in all our hearts When we talk of Him and hear of Him, we commune with Him In this communion, diversity is dissolved and we feel united in the same inner Spirit,—God,—and experience endless joy Now, we cannot but love each other, because we have realised our union with one another This is an affinity not on the physical plane, but on the spiritual

SANATANA DHARMA

Q. We love specially Hinduism, because its message is Sanatana Dharma For us you are the Messenger

Ramdas· Sanatana Dharma means Eternal Religion It is also universal This is the faith of the Hindus Ramdas has come to you with the message of Sanatana Dharma. He loves you all alike, to whatever religion you may belong, because, he knows all religions lead to the same goal,—whether it be Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Zoroastrianism Ramdas does not believe in conversions, so called There are many ways of approach to God and all those who pursue these paths are equally dear to us Whatever path anyone might follow, as each one is on the path best suited to him, let him develop an universal outlook Let him not find fault with other religions Let him not develop an exclusive spirit and say that his path alone is good and other paths are not

THE WORLD IS GOD'S HOUSE

If we believe all paths lead to the same goal, we cannot but love all equally By developing this equal vision, we free ourselves from likes and dislikes The love that flows out of our heart is then equally distributed to all alike In that lies true happiness We are unhappy when we see distinctions East and West are both one There is no difference The whole world

belongs to one God All men and women are His children Why should we see distinctions among them on the basis of nationality, race or creed? As in one and the same house there are many people living, so on this earth, which is God's house, we all live together Countries are like different rooms of the same house Although you live in one of the rooms, you call the entire house yours Similarly you must be able to say that you belong to the whole world, and not to a particular country.

Q I would like to know if it would have been better for me this morning to read your book than come here and hear you

Ramdas Reading of the book you can do at any time. This opportunity of hearing Ramdas would otherwise be gone The book is always with you, but not Ramdas And, to hear from him at first-hand is better than reading what he has written

SPONTANEITY OF DIVINE EXPRESSION

Q Is it possible through knowledge to come to know the answer to the ultimate question, that is to say, the cause of Existence and its purpose?

Ramdas Existence, by itself, is beyond cause and effect. Ramdas speaks of the supreme source of all life The source is Existence Its one nature is that it expresses itself spontaneously We cannot know why it so expresses We can only say that it is its nature to do so, just as it is the nature of the sun to give out light spontaneously Whenever we attribute some reason or purpose to what we do, we get caught in the meshes of nescience. We must recognise the truth that our life flows from the Divine source without any particular object or purpose Then, we are really free and happy God has become the universe as well as all the beings and creatures in it, because it is His nature to be so The tendency to attribute reasons for anything that happens is born of an undeveloped intellect or false imagination

SINNING AGAINST OURSELVES

Q In life, it often happens that we wish to deny the divine Existence, either in ourselves or outside of us Is it sinning in the face of God, whom we either do not know or refuse to acknowledge?

Ramdas It is not sinning We are only denying ourselves the supreme joy and peace we shall be getting by faith in the divine Existence and in the fact that our life is an expression of

it, nay, that our life flows from it That Existence does not look upon us either as sinful or as virtuous By our denial, we make ourselves miserable If at all, we are sinning only against ourselves and not against that Existence or God, because, in the eyes of God, there is no sinner

WHY POVERTY AND MISERY?

Q In that case, there are so many people who are miserable and have no joy in this life; why should it be so?

Ramdas Because they have not known the source of their life, which is in the Divine When the Divine is known, then there can be no reason for a person to be unhappy We stand aloof from God, wrongly assuming an independent individuality Actually, we are not independent of Him 'We are parts of one stupendous whole and we are also that whole' To realise this is freedom and joy So long as we are not conscious of our divine Existence, our life will be fitful, restless and miserable We are then like children separated from their mother When they get back to their mother, they become happy So also when we come to know the Divine, the source of all life, we become blissful On the contrary, when we forget or deny it we cannot but be unhappy, care-worn and fear-stricken

POVERTY IS NO BAR

Q Can we say this, for example, of the workers who generally toil all day long, and yet are very poor and unhappy?

Ramdas They can also know God, the source of their life, if only they turn their minds towards Him in prayer during their leisure hours You will see it is much easier for them to tune their mind to the Divine source and to understand that their life has evolved from it, than for those who are rich and steeped in the pleasures of life Our great Rishis and saints were born under very poor circumstances and they laboured hard all day long We had saints from among weavers, potters, cobblers and shopkeepers This goes to show that external conditions such as occupation and environment do not in any way hamper the progress of the soul towards its eternal source, if the urge within is strong enough to lead us to the goal

It does not matter whether one is a prince, a millionaire or a labourer What is needed is intense aspiration for the Divine

There were monarchs who had realised Him,—like Janaka and Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Aurelius' Book of Meditation reveals the spiritual greatness of that Roman Emperor. Janaka was a Jnani or 'Knower of Brahman' Then, again, we had saints from the poorest classes They were all well-known They were worshipped by thousands of their devotees They had attained the highest liberation and bliss Freedom is of the Spirit Our body may be richly clothed, sumptuously fed, we may live in pomp and luxury, and yet if the soul is bound to the things of the flesh, we shall have to undergo bitter sorrow and suffering

KNOWLEDGE IS HAPPINESS

Q Is it right to say that we are led to the goal by our keen desire for happiness, or by our intense fear of unhappiness? Should not the desire for knowledge be our sole aim? I feel, we should not aim at happiness, but we should simply aim at knowledge

Ramdas Ramdas, from his own experience, can declare that true knowledge and true joy are synonymous We aim at knowledge only, believing that thereby we shall be happy We are happy because we know that knowledge alone can grant us real freedom,—which means happiness So, knowledge is sought, not for its own sake as something apart from happiness, but because knowledge is happiness itself This knowledge is the highest that can be known Great scientists have made many researches and gained knowledge of many new facts That is one kind of knowledge But it does not make the scientists happy Because it is not knowledge of the Supreme Truth What we mean by knowledge here is the awareness of the immortal Reality within us, which sets us free from ignorance—the cause of all our misery

The ambition of everyone is to attain lasting happiness This ambition can be fulfilled only by knowing that he is not the body but the immortal Spirit who is pure bliss and peace Release from the bondage of ignorance is like the release of a bird confined in a cage The soul wants peace,—peace which can be gained only by Self-knowledge, or knowledge of the Eternal Everyone of us is aiming at attaining ever-abiding joy and peace This is the goal of all beings So long as we do not have it, what are we? We full well know it

KNOWLEDGE GIVES LIBERATION

So, we do not seek knowledge for its own sake We wish to get rid of an obsession which, like a dark cloud, hovers over us, casting a shadow of gloom, despair and woe on our life Knowledge liberates us from this most undesirable condition, and the instant we get that knowledge we become free and blissful Any knowledge that does not bring us this supreme bliss and freedom is not worth acquiring We stuff our minds with knowledge of so many facts and things gained from all and sundry, or reading all kinds of books The brain becomes a repository of learning about all the ephemeral and passing phases of life Naturally, such a man becomes a restless being,—unbalanced, confused and erratic in his behaviour and conduct Seek, therefore to know the true source of your life,—God That is why you are here

A PASSING SHOW

Q If a man feels he has witnessed death a number of times, and if many who were near and dear to him have been killed, and life no longer has any sweetness or charm for him, is he just in a morbid mood or is it illness?

Ramdas All this goes to show that everything apparent is perishable Nothing is real on the physical plane of existence There is a beginning and an end to all things and beings Everything must pass away This is the lesson we learn when we see people dying So many die or are killed, and the same fate awaits us all Our body, which we foolishly think to be permanent, will also pass away some day But the Spirit within us is immortal If we aspire to remain unaffected by what happens before us in this transitory world, it is essential that we should recognise the existence of the Divine Spirit in us

The physical part of us must perish in one way or another. due to accident, disease, old age, and so on Death is inevitable This truth we should not forget We should not be afraid of death, for the Spirit is deathless When we realise this, we are free from the fear of death, which is only for the body. When we have realised that we are the immortal Spirit, we remain calm and serene in all conditions Our friends and relations may pass away before our very eyes There is no use crying for them all our life.

WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD

Men of wisdom exhort us: 'Do not cry for the perishable.' Weep not for the dead. Stand firmly fixed in the consciousness of your immortal Existence and see as an unperturbed witness, the passing vicissitudes of life, just as you witness the clouds that pass before your gaze. Let us watch the divine play on the world stage. People appear on it and disappear from it. The world is a passing show. We are the sun of Truth and the world a flitting panorama like the clouds. Whatever has name and form must change and vanish. It is only that immortal Truth, Spirit or God, that nameless, formless, birthless and deathless Reality,—with which we are one,— that never changes and ever exists.

MEDITATION

(At the request of the friends present, Ramdas gave them the following hints on Meditation, before they commenced it.)

Ramdas: Before we start meditation, Ramdas would like to give you a few hints on the basis of his own experience.

What is needed first is concentration of mind. Without concentration, you cannot do meditation. The process is: concentration, meditation and absorption into the Divine within you. A wandering and restless mind is not conducive to successful meditation. Concentration is on God within you. Meditation is a steady contemplation of Him. Absorption is to realise your oneness with Him. God is at once with form and without form. His nature is all-pervading, static and radiant. To realise Him, all desires should be completely sublimated.

Now regarding concentration, there are three different methods. First, concentration on an image of God. The image is not merely a symbol but the very expression of God. Second, concentration on the Name of God. Here the mind is fixed on the Name by constant repetition. Name is God. Third, concentration on light as God. Your mind always visualises the Divine as Light. Light is God.

In all the above methods, the devotee conceives an ardent longing and love for God and through the attunement of the mind with any one of these three manifestations of His, he reaches the super-conscious state which grants him knowledge of God and His presence.

Meditation is to think of the qualities or attributes of God God is an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent Reality He is Absolute Truth, Consciousness and Bliss He is infinite love, compassion, goodness and mercy He is our own Father, Mother and Friend He is our sole refuge When we dwell on these attributes with a concentrated mind, all the undesirable thoughts disappear giving place to mental equanimity and traquillity

Absorption means attainment of a still mind, in which state the body-consciousness vanishes and the sense of individuality ceases and you feel that you are flooded with Divine light and joy In this ecstatic trance, your life has dissolved in Divine Life and Existence In other words, you feel one with God Now, God has revealed Himself in you All desires are dead Your vision is now universal Your love goes out towards all beings alike You are the very embodiment of God

THE PERSONAL FORM OF GOD

The form of God should bewitch your mind Your thought must be always centered on Him Your life must be dedicated to Him Separation from Him must make you utterly miserable You should lose yourself in Him

His name should sound sweet to your ears and it should constantly ring in them His name should be your sole support and shelter The Name should permeate all parts of your being and be your all in all Name is itself God

God is Light Our mind must continuously bathe in the light The whole universe is pervaded and enveloped by the light There is no darkness for you, for you have the light of life,—the supreme splendour of God Light is your God You belong to light, light belongs to you, and you are the very expression of light

The votaries of God who meditate upon Him as Image, Light or Name, transcend, through concentration and meditation, into that divine consciousness, where there is neither form, nor light nor name There is only one Existence, one Truth, one Power This is liberation, salvation beatitude and perfection Meditation is done with a view to realising this supreme state, if it can be called a state, for it is beyond all states, by attaining which the soul is blessed with complete freedom, joy and peace

Ramdas would once again say that before you can have the

super-conscious experience of union and oneness with God, your minds should be still, free from all desires Sadhana of concentration and meditation is done solely with this end in view This is the greatest achievement in life When the mind is still, the body is forgotten and you are still awake, you experience oneness with God and are filled with divine rapture Now you are said to be in a state of Samadhi, —a state of unshakable equilibrium and perfect peace

HOW TO BEGIN

Ramdas will tell you how to begin Sit in any posture suitable for you Hindus sit down squatting on the floor, cross-legged Muslims draw their legs backward and sit on their haunches Christians kneel down. You may assume any convenient position, when at prayer or meditation. One can even sit on a chair There is one essential factor which should never be forgotten before you start your mental prayer or invocation of the Name *Bring into your mind the image of your* God, or Guru, and humbling yourself before Him, offer your prayers to Him for His grace, so that He may give you faith and strength to commune, free from any internal disturbances, with Him who is already seated within you Feel that you are blessed by Him Guru or God is within you,—be aware of this. Then go forward

Let your body be erect Close your eyes and direct your inward gaze to the centre of the eye-brows or the heart Think of God, repeat the Guru Mantra Dwell mentally on the attributes of God and thus stop the play of thoughts of external objects Allow the mind to settle down

A CAUTION

One caution is, when you sit, do not stiffen your body There should be no tension No strain on the brain, no forceful methods for control of thoughts Sit in an easy posture, with your body and mind completely relaxed, so that the thought of God may gradually sink into the mind and put a stop to its restlessness Gradually, you will find that the mind has dissolved in the Divine and become one with Him

A pure and still mind is itself the cosmic all-pervading Spirit In this way, let meditation be done, to start with for about fifteen minutes When the mind is highly distracted and refuses

to be controlled, do not exert any force or have recourse to any drastic discipline Pray to God inwardly, with all your heart, for His gracious aid Then He is bound to pour into you His light and grace If you go on with this practice from day to day, you will come to feel God's presence with you You will have a super-physical experience by the transcendence of the body idea, followed by the consciousness of oneness with God

A PRAYER

The prayer should go forth as follows

'O God! I pray to you in all meekness Deign to shower Thy Grace on me so that in my meditation I may only think of Thee as my sole Master and Mother, dwelling in my heart and pervading everywhere May You grant me Your Divine Vision and the realisation of my oneness with You May I be gifted with the firm faith that Thou alone art the cause of all activities in the world and by Thy power alone all my movements take place I have sprung from Thee Thou art my sole support and refuge I am nothing Thou art everything I am Thine, for ever and ever'

Let us now sit down to pray and meditate

"I NOW BELIEVE"

Q O Swami, I am very happy to see you I had known you through your books and was craving to see you

Ramdas Ramdas is also very happy to see you He heard about you from Jean Herbert

Q I was in Persia for a long time and therefore I like Asia far more than Europe It is very difficult for one to lead a spiritual life in Europe I wish to come to India Will I be able to find some work there as service for the benefit of people?

Ramdas You will have to come and see for yourself how best you can find the type of work you want As regards finding Europe not congenial for spiritual practices, Ramdas would say that all places are good provided your aspiration for God is intense

Q. Swami, I never believed in God or religion before But now I do believe As I belonged to no church or religion, I cannot go to any church now.

Ramdas It is not necessary that one should go to church if one is not in a position to do so God is seated in your heart Worship Him there When you find Him within your heart and everywhere, you will realise that the whole universe is His manifestation, and whatever you do is His worship and His service

Q I found great joy in translating your books I have finished the "Letters" and that is ready for print We shall take up "Gita Sandesh" next

GENEVA,
25th August 1954

SERVICE, — BEFORE AND AFTER REALISATION

Q Could you tell us something about service?

Ramdas There are two kinds of service service done with a view to attaining God and service done after attaining Him In the first kind of service, you serve as a servant of God for self-purification, for relieving the distress of others Such opportunities of service you can have in your own house and also in the houses of your neighbours, when they need your help You should serve your elders in the house with all tenderness and love Since you do this service out of pure love, you do not expect anything in return for it Love is its own reward A true servant of God cannot bear to see the sufferings of others His heart goes out to them and he does all he can to relieve their distress The weak and the ailing receive his sympathetic attention and service This kind of service is called 'Nishkama Seva, or selfless service, which purifies the mind and illumines the heart

Generally, people serve others for gain and remuneration, or for fame and name When you serve out of pure sympathy or compassion, you get nearer God, that is, nearer to the state of inner freedom and peace By such service, your ego-sense is dissolved and you become the holy abode of God

When you serve a person with love, your sense of 'I'-ness gradually disappears and you feel one with the person you serve free from all consciousness of duality, with the consequence you enjoy rare peace and joy A rich man when he serves in this spirit, a starving beggar, brings himself down to the level of the beggar, because he serves with all humility, and attains peace on the plane of the supreme spiritual unity and oneness of all lives Usually, a sense of superiority puts him up on a false pedestal, but selfless service helps in purifying his mind, — a condition which is essential for realising God

Now, let us consider the second kind of service After realising God, our life flows out spontaneously in the service of humanity In the first case there was the sense of doership we did the service in the spirit of a servant or instrument In the,

second case, the ego-sense is completely absent. It is the divine energy that activates us and we feel that we are not the doers, but the Divine within us Just as a flower gives out its fragrance to whomsoever approaches or uses it, so love from within us radiates towards everybody and manifests as spontaneous service. Love which does not express itself as service is not love Without the ego-sense we are active and our entire life is an oblation and sacrifice The examples of the sun and the flower are apt here There is absolutely no motive or expectation of any gain for ourselves from all that we do In fact, we are not conscious that we are doing anything, while we are all along intensely active When we feed, clothe and attend on anybody, we feel like doing all these things to our own body, for which we do not expect any return or praise or commendation, because all bodies are our own, for, we as the all-pervading Atman or Spirit reside in all bodies

THE EXAMPLE OF MOTHER KRISHNABAI

For example, it is in this spirit that Mother Krishnabai is serving in the Ashram those who are in distress Many poor diseased and helpless people come to the Ashram She serves them all in a natural and spontaneous manner When children, dirty or naked, come to the Ashram, the Mother takes them to the bath-room, gives them a clean wash and clothes them with new garments When she is asked "Why do you take such pains for children who are perfect strangers to you and belong to a low class or caste?", her reply is "I feel I feed and clothe them in the same way as I feed and clothe my own body. It is my nature to do so Their bodies are also mine I see no difference When they suffer I suffer It is for relieving my own suffering that I serve them I care not for praise or appreciation"

The Mother's life is a life of dedication It has become a spontaneous expression of God's love and power in her This work cannot even be called service It is divine love and grace revealed in her actions Action is not to be abandoned, neglected or shirked When you become a light for yourself, you become automatically a light for all others Having found peace for yourself, it becomes your nature to share it with all others

NEED FOR DISCRETION

Q Until we feel that God acts through us, should we go on doing everything as we may be asked to do, without any discri-

mination on our part?

Ramdas We must serve others only when they need our service, by which we are able to afford them relief, comfort or joy We should not force our service upon anybody who is unwilling to receive it and who may not be pleased with such service Discretion has to be exercised in order to know whom to serve and when to serve The object of service is to give relief to the person we serve As for ourselves, our happiness lies in the happiness of those whom we serve In other words, we must find joy in serving others

Q But there are people who prey upon you like leeches they feel that they are not getting sufficient out of you and insist on getting more

Ramdas When we know that people are not benefited by our service, it is better to withhold it This does not mean that we dislike them Our God-given energy must be put to the best account The world is full of suffering, — we see it at every step, — and we should attend to the most needy Our hearts should go out to them For serving all such persons, God gives us abundantly, if we are selfless and true to Him Our entire being and resources should be offered at the altar of God, which means at the altar of humanity,— humanity that is diseased, suffering, or is in want In humanity, of course, are included your near and dear ones You must live and act with universal vision Your heart's sympathy and compassion should flow out towards all alike "If we mutually serve and help one another, we can make a heaven of this earth " There will be no want and suffering anywhere

HAPPINESS IN SERVICE

In service and sacrifice lies the glory of human life The more you serve and sacrifice, the happier you are The more you give away, the happier you feel This, many seem to forget They think that the more they possess, the more happy they will be This is not true Your real happiness consists in giving yourselves away in the service of others The mother, for instance, untiringly serves her child day and night In this service she is perfectly happy as there is no selfishness in her. It is all a service out of pure love She bears nobly all discomforts and hardships for the sake of the love she bears towards

the child. In such sacrifice she glories and finds rare joy and peace

Really, in the renunciation of our desires, comforts and security for the sake of others, there is joy Amongst you there may be so many who are leading a life of service and sacrifice Those who do not live such a life would do well to extend their vision beyond the narrow family circle so as to cover the wide world and serve humanity in a selfless spirit and make their own life blessed and sublime

Here, Ramdas wishes to make it clear that he does not mean that you should allow people always to hang on you like parasites Those who are without employment may be provided with it under yourself, or elsewhere through your recommendation Those who need help to stand on their own legs may be afforded help to the extent of your capacity You may help children who have no means for their education Orphans and destitutes require all your sympathy and support See that you do not keep them in a state of perpetual dependence on you Do not expect any praise or expression of gratitude from the persons you help Serve those in need for your own uplift and joy You should not have anything to do with name and fame Selfless service accelerates your spiritual evolution Do not feel that you are either a big patron or philanthropist and that you have done a great favour Root out the idea from your mind that you are a master and the other is a servant

A TRUE SERVANT OF GOD

All help should be rendered with love and equality as its basis The chief qualities of a true servant of God are that he should be absolutely truthful and honest He must consider all as dear and near to him,—as his own relations He must possess a sterling character and must be morally high and pure It is only through such devotees that God works for the good of others In this exalted state the servant enjoys true peace God is his sole Master, who envelops him with His grace and manifests Himself in him in all His glory

There are still other characteristics of a true devotee He is free from lust, greed and wrath His words are always gentle and soothing He does not slander anybody He never uses bad words A smile and a gentle word go a long way in alleviating the pain and sorrow of others His hands and feet must

always be employed for the benefit of others

Saints are embodiments of all these virtues, and therefore are held in great reverence Even their names have a great charm for their admirers and followers It is true they give love freely to all and receive from all an abundance of love Blessed are those who have such illumined souls Blessed is the Mother Earth that has produced such glorious sons ~

CONCENTRATION ON SOUND

Q During meditation yesterday, I had a strange experience When I started repeating the Name, I felt I was entering a cave and the Name was resounding and expanding I felt, then, the opening of the cave was within my body, and I was going farther and farther inside, repeating the Name I could not see or be conscious of anything else My body was so much stiffened that if anybody had touched me, I would have fallen down

Ramdas That means you were not conscious of your body You were just witnessing your body, standing apart from it But did you find peace? Can you describe your condition when you were having that experience?

Q I was so much immersed in the sound that nothing else attracted me It kept on increasing in volume and I was absolutely lost in that It was probably peace I must say that for hours after the meditation it kept on, less intensely I felt at night also that something in me was happy and something else was unhappy, and it kept on recurring

Ramdas So you had a pleasant experience Did it give you quietness?

Q It gave me moderate peace

Ramdas In such states of emotion we feel we are not the body, but something subtler than that As we progress on the path, we have to pass through many stages Sound is very easy for the mind to concentrate upon As soon as the mind is absorbed in it, we rise higher into a state of super-consciousness, where there is absolute soundlessness It is said in the scriptures that Brahman revealed Itself originally as sound and the first sound was OM Therefore OM is the nearest symbol of God for helping the concentration of the mind and leading to the realisation of Brahman OM, the Shabda-Brahman, is included in the Mantra "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" The Brahman which is beyond sound, but which can be attained through

sound, has manifested Itself as the entire universe. The sound that you hear is what comes out of that infinite silence When we repeat the Mantra aloud we tune ourselves to the sound produced by it, and through the sound we enter into the perfect stillness within us So the sound must possess us The sound is the first movement of the motionless The method of approach through sound has been found to be the easiest Some people worship fire, some worship various forms of God, and some others worship sound, that is, they concentrate their mind on sound As soon as the mind is absorbed in sound, the consciousness of the body is lost and we are drowned in an ocean of peace and bliss

Next time when you get this experience you have to go beyond all forms

"WILL YOU SAVE ME?"

Q Swamiji, will you save me? Will you save me?

Ramdas Yes What is the matter? Ramdas has come here to give you all as much help as he can What is your trouble?

Q I was initiated by my Guru, but he had not realised God He is a disciple of Swami - He gave me initiation and is now staying far away I have not been able to get proper guidance from him Will you save me, Swami?

Ramdas Ramdas has no objection to give you guidance, but he feels it should be done with the knowledge and permission of your Guru If you can send a telegram to him and get his permission, Ramdas will be only happy to help you

Q I shall do so and come to you again as soon as I get a reply You see, Swamiji, I am very much worried I am a woman who has been working very hard all my life I grow vegetables and sell them in the market. I have another woman to assist me, but somehow we do not pull on together She does not like my way of devotion and on that account I am greatly worried I cannot get away from her, nor can I send her away as she is a cripple and will be helpless

Ramdas Do you think your Guru will have any objection to Ramdas giving you guidance?

Q No, not at all In fact he knows you well and had written to me to see you

Ramdas Is it so? Then it is all right What Mantra did he give you?

Q He gave me "Harı Om Tat Sat "

Ramdas: Ramdas shall gıve you the same Mantra Here ıt ıs· "Hari Om Tat Sat " Now, please repeat ıt as Ramdas does

Q I am very happy I feel a heavy load has been taken off my head

GENEVA,
26th August 1954

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

RELIGION AND WORK

When Ramdas exhorts people whom he meets in the course of his itinerary, to seek and realise God, he may seem to be encouraging them to lead an idle life Ramdas is far from doing so He can tell you that in the name of God and religion you should not give up your daily routine By remembering God for even a short time, you will be able to do your daily work more peacefully and efficiently Prayer brightens your mind and you work with a cheer and without strain Heart with God and hands at work this is the message of Ramdas to you all Do not forget God, however heavy your work might be To commune with God, even for five minutes, brings sunshine into your life He will listen to your short and simple prayer

A STORY

You must have heard of Sage Narada He was a great votary of God's Name He repeated the Name all the twenty-four hours of the day and went about all over the world proclaiming the greatness of the Name For his continuous chanting of the Name, he became proud of himself He saw people in the world taking the Name only for a short time, whereas he himself was taking the Name all day and night Therefore he considered himself to be the greatest devotee of God In the course of his wanderings he went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu Looking at Narada, Vishnu came to know that Narada had become proud of his devotion Narada, with an air of self-importance asked Vishnu who His greatest devotee in the world was

Lord Vishnu asked Narada to go to a certain village on the earth where, He said, lived a farmer whom He considered as His greatest devotee Narada was surprised how could a poor farmer rank first among the devotees of Vishnu? However, he went to the house of the farmer-devotee and was received by him with great honour and hospitality The devotee served the sage with all love and reverence and begged him to stay in his

humble abode for a few days Narada stayed on and watched what the farmer was doing

The farmer's routine was to get up early in the morning, take aloud God's Name once, and then go to attend to his work in the fields In the evening, on returning home after his day's work, he would perform the usual household duties and before retiring to bed, utter once again God's Name Narada noticed this routine of the farmer for two or three days and felt utterly disappointed He was wondering how Lord Vishnu could take this farmer who uttered the Name of God only twice a day to be His greatest devotee He left the house and proceeded straight to Vishnu and recounted to Him all that he had seen when he was with the farmer-devotee Narada then asked Him how He could consider the farmer as the foremost of His devotees

'I will show you how he is My greatest devotee,' said Vishnu, and having got a cup filled with oil to its brim, handed it over to Narada and told him to go round Vaikuntha and return to Him without spilling a drop of oil from the cup Accordingly, Narada, taking the cup in his hands, walked slowly and carefully, concentrating all his mind upon the cup, and after some time returned to Vishnu without spilling even a drop of oil

Vishnu, on seeing him back, questioned him 'How many times did you remember Me during the period of your circumambulation of Vaikuntha with the cup of oil in your hand?' Narada expressed surprise at this question and explained "Lord, are you joking with me? How is it possible to remember anything else when I have to carry out a task of such a difficult nature entrusted to me by You? My whole mind was centered on the cup so that I might not spill any drop from it"

At this reply, Vishnu laughed and remarked "Look at the case of the farmer He engages himself in hundreds of activities, carrying heavy responsibilities of his wordly life Nevertheless, he does not fail to remember Me at least twice a day, whereas in a short period when you were engaged in carrying the cup of oil, you utterly forgot Me"

This reply from Vishnu humbled Narada He realised that Vishnu was right, and that he had made a mistake in thinking that he was superior to all other devotees This illustration goes to show that the best way is to offer regular prayers to God, take His Name even though for a short time daily and then be engaged

in your work,—and perform it honestly and conscientiously, having God-remembrance stamped on your heart.

Loving service itself is worship. Ramdas can give you two more examples. In Pandharpur,—a place famous for the temple of Vithoba, an image representing Lord Krishna,—there was an ardent devotee. He was also an affectionate son of his parents whom he served with great love. One day, when he was engaged in the service of his parents, Vithoba came to the door of his house and called him out. The devotee said: 'Please wait, O Lord, I shall come to you after I have finished serving my parents.' So, he made Lord Vithoba wait. Service of one's parents is most important and is held superior to all other service.

STORY OF THE PROUD YOGI

When you serve your fellowmen, God is pleased and acknowledges you as His child. There was a Sannyasi who was practising meditation, sitting beneath a tree. One day, while meditating, a bird's excreta fell on his head from above. Thus disturbed, the Sannyasi became angry, looked up and saw the bird sitting directly above his head. The Sannyasi gazed at the bird, his eyes full of anger. At once he found to his surprise that the bird was burnt to ashes.

His astonishment soon gave place to an overweening pride at his own yogic powers. As usual, that day he went to the village nearby for alms. He stopped in front of a house and asked for alms. When he saw nobody coming out of the house to attend to him even though he had waited for about five minutes, he called out again in an angry tone. He felt he was a great Yogi and was puffed up with conceit.

The mistress of the house was busy attending on her husband who was ill and could not leave him suddenly. Hearing the angry words of the Sannyasi, she warned him from where she was: 'I am not a bird to be burnt to ashes by your curse.' The Sannyasi was taken aback and wondered how this woman could know the instance of the bird. Because of her loyalty and service to her husband, she had acquired supernatural powers. She also directed the Sannyasi, if he wanted to learn more, to the village butcher. Finding the latter in his shop he approached him. The moment the butcher saw him, he asked the Sannyasi if he had not been sent by such and such a woman. The Sannyasi's surprise was now still greater. He asked the butcher how he could know things in

the way he did The butcher replied 'I am serving my old parents with all love and devotion They are to me the very images of God I also carry on my business honestly and for their sake'

The Sannyasi's eyes were really opened now and the light came to him that it was not only running away to the forest and meditating upon God that granted one supernatural powers, but also doing one's duty and service of humanity, looking upon all beings as manifestations of God Perhaps, living in the world and serving humanity with all love is a better way Ramdas can definitely say that such service, done with absolute unselfishness, can by itself lead to God-realisation

GOD MEANS WELL OF ALL

Q Suppose a man has raised a beautiful crop on his land and the whole crop is destroyed by bad weather and he is left without anything How to understand why God gave him the crop and why He destroyed it?

Ramdas It is hard to imagine that God means ill of anybody in the world According to the Hindu scriptures, creation, preservation and destruction are the Lila of God This theory signifies that God has become everything and enacts the cosmic processes All objects are subject to destruction It is wrong to expect God to do things as we wish Nor can we understand His ways What is good for one is not good for another Some of us wish sometimes that there should be no more rainfall as it would be harmful to our crops But at the same time the crops of others may require more rains God is not guided by these considerations He does all things in His own way for the good of all Ours is but to submit to His will and be content with all situations in which God places us God is the controlling power over countless millions of creatures He acts in His own unerring way

Our Ashram is engaged in some agricultural activities We have a few acres of fields on which we grow paddy Sometimes, the crops used to be very bad owing to absence of rains at the proper time When the plants were just flowering they got parched up The produce was nil or negligible It was God's will There were also years in which the Ashram got bumper-crops,—much more than we had expected That, again, was God's will Whatever we get we partly distribute to the workers and partly use for feeding the poor and needy Our farms are

working somewhat on a community basis All workers are sharers in the produce Our kitchen is open to everybody And so God sees to it that we are not short of food If He takes away in one way, He gives in another We are able to carry on by His help He is rightly called Providence Truly, if we depend upon Him, He provides us Our lack of faith in Him is the cause of our want and suffering He is all mercy, goodness and love

In the suburbs of the Ashram there are wet fields in low-lying areas which get supplies of water throughout the year from a river There are also dry fields which do not get such supplies as they are on a higher level When there is a heavy rainfall, the cultivators of the hilly tracts praise God, for the rainfall is good for their crops But when, due to heavy rains, the crops in the wet fields get submerged, these owners cry out 'O God, what a calamity you have brought on us!' Thus, what is good for one may sometimes be bad for another How can God please all in the world?

Q God has to meet the wishes of all?

Ramdas The changing mind of man cannot be satisfied permanently with anything What he likes at one time, he does not like at another What he wants now, he does not want later The only way for a man to be always happy is to submit to God's will and, leaving everything to Him, be content with the condition in which He places him From changing circumstances we cannot get real happiness Happiness lies within.

Q. That means, our internal attitude has to be changed?

Ramdas That is precisely what is necessary All things happen as He wills Submission is the only course open to us Surrender means inner contentment and peace

FRANCE

LYON
27th August 1954

SPIRITUALITY IS ONE

Questioner May I mention in the papers that you are touring about to unite the Western and Eastern spiritualities?

Ramdas There is no such thing as Western or Eastern spirituality Spirituality is one all over the world

Q What is the exact name of the religion that you have come to represent?

Ramdas Universal religion

Q How are you related to Gandhiji?

Ramdas Ramdas is a great admirer of Gandhiji He has no other relationship with anybody except the relationship of the Spirit, whether it is with Gandhiji or anybody else in the world

Q Are you the authority in the religion you are representing?

Ramdas Ramdas is only a humble servant of God, enjoined upon by his Master to spread universal religion His mission is to propagate the ideal of Universal Love and Service

Q What are your impressions about Caux?

Ramdas Ramdas's impression was that people of all countries are assembling there and are freely mingling together in a spirit of brotherhood

HUMAN FAMILY IS ONE

Q What is the exact purpose of the tour you have undertaken?

Ramdas For propagating the ideal of Universal Love and Service, which means that, although we belong to different nationalities and countries, we are essentially one in Spirit East, West, South and North have no significance in the realm of the Spirit As such, we are all brothers and sisters, because we belong to one human family, and our father and mother is God Ramdas is going from place to place to speak about God to those who are interested in matters spiritual, based on his vision and experience of the Divine so that those who are on the Godward path may be benefited

Q Are you going to have speeches and gatherings?

Ramdas. Like this small gathering People may also come and meet him and if any spiritual help is required, Ramdas is prepared to give it. We come together for bringing ourselves nearer God

WAY TO WORLD PEACE

Q What is the best way of working for peace in the world?

Ramdas The best way is to hold communion with God who dwells within us, because He stands for universal peace When we all tune our mind with the universal peace, then the world will be filled with peace

Q What is the most effective means of work in the world, collective work or individual work?

Ramdas The best work that we do is what proceeds from our deep contemplation or remembrance of God Any other work that we do, forgetful of God, brings discord in the world The work that we do remembering God brings peace and harmony in the world If Ramdas can understand aright Mahatma Gandhi's mission in the world, it was only this He said that we should commune with God and then work in the world If these go together, we will be working for peace and harmony in the world Work done in this spirit will be blessed

Q· Is there any parallel between your work and that of Swami Vivekananda?

Ramdas Ramdas is also working on the same lines Vivekananda's ideal was service of God in humanity Ramdas also holds out before the world the same ideal

WORK AND WORSHIP

Q· Swami Vivekananda took up various works afterwards

Ramdas· We must remember God and work. Then that work becomes consecrated and blessed and helps humanity in its progress towards perfect happiness Such work is selfless work, which is exactly what is needed in the world for common happiness, common elevation and illumination Work without worship and worship without work will not be conducive to human happiness Work and worship should go together.

Q Have you heard of a person, known as George, living somewhere in France? He says he is Christ reborn, that he had

lived here 4,000 years ago and that those who see him realise God What is your opinion?

Ramdas So far as Ramdas is concerned, he sees the Divine in everyone of you He does not know that he should see God only in one and not in another Those who awaken God in the hearts of people, are really great souls We must respect and revere them Ramdas sees divinity everywhere and with this vision he has come from India With this vision he lives and also shares his joy with you If it is possible for Ramdas to meet that great soul, he will surely do so and would like to see him For Ramdas, you are all the forms of his eternal Beloved Ramdas has come here to teach you how to see God in yourself and everywhere about you, so that you can see unity in diversity, because you are not merely a perishable form, but you are the immortal, omnipresent Spirit If you realise this, you will enjoy everlasting peace and bliss

Q. The realisation is, after all, individual What are the things that you recommend for seeing the Divine?

Ramdas Ramdas' means of approach was the constant chanting of God's Name, by which you tune yourself with the Divine within you and realise that you are the Divine

JESUS AND OTHER PROPHETS

Q Jesus has realised God and says he is a servant of God Do you believe in that?

Ramdas Yes, Ramdas believes in it Jesus said —"I and My Father are one" Still He called himself the son of the Father

Q So do you mean to say that there is no fundamental difference in nature?

Ramdas If a human being is illumined, there is no difference between him and Jesus

Q Why is it then that only Jesus achieved that state?

Ramdas There are so many others also who have achieved that state

Q Why has nobody illumined the world as Jesus did?

Ramdas Buddha came before Jesus, so also Krishna, who too illumined the world

Q If Jesus were among us, would you recognise him?

Ramdas Certainly, yes

Q: It is a normal thing to see God everywhere, but the important thing is to realise God.

Ramdas Without realising God, you cannot see God everywhere

MEANING OF GOD-REALISATION

Q What do you mean by 'Realising God'?

Ramdas It is to see God within you and also see Him everywhere outside you Ramdas will tell you what God-realisation is from his own experience God-realisation does not come unless your mind is absolutely pure If you are controlled by sense-desires, you cannot attain God God-realisation is not a joke You must rise above the body-idea and know that you are the all-pervading Spirit Then you see God everywhere, know that all forms are your own forms You feel one with all beings and creatures on the earth This is what is meant by God-realisation. Now you are free from lust, greed and wrath, and your life has merged in universal life, and you are in a state of eternal peace and joy Your eyes will be radiating the light of God and your body will be a hallowed temple of God

MEANS TO GOD-REALISATION

Q What did you do to attain this?

Ramdas That is precisely what Ramdas said It can be realised through the repetition of the glorious Name of God

Q Are there no other means of attaining the goal?

Ramdas: There are many other means But Ramdas found this to be the easiest

Q Is it the easiest for you, or for everybody?

Ramdas Those who find it easy may take it up

Q There is another easier way As Christ said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"

Ramdas It is very easy to say that, but to put it into practice is not easy Merely saying "Love your neighbour" is not enough You have really to love him and that can be done only when your heart is pure How can you get a pure heart? Only by continuous thought of God.

Q To try to put such things into practice during 2,000 years, nobody has attempted What are we today?

Ramdas Jesus has said, 'Blessed is he who is pure in heart, because he shall see God'

FOOD RESTRICTIONS

Q What about food restrictions?

Ramdas Take mild and non-irritant food only,—what the Hindus call Sattwic food

Q Which are the Sattwic things?

Ramdas As far as Ramdas' experience goes, one, must avoid spices, chillies, onions, garlic and meat If you take to milk, fruits and vegetables, it will help you to keep your mind pure That is why people who are on the Godward path take only very simple food The mind must be free from gusts of passion and sense desires Only when we are free from these, we can attain peace and serenity which is absolutely necessary for communing with God

Q What about eggs?

Ramdas Eggs do not come under Sattwic diet But there is one thing If your devotion to God is intense, the food question does not arise at all In the early stages, restrictions on food are essential But as your devotion for God increases, and gets established, you can slacken the restrictions imposed upon you by yourself, because you know which is the best food for you, for calm and steady meditation and contemplation of the Divine It is rightly said "It does not matter what goes into your mouth, but it matters much what comes out of it"

SEPARATION FROM GOD IS SIN

Q What have you to say about the notion of sin and fall?

Ramdas As deeper and deeper our selfishness grows, the more and more sinful we become Separation from God is sin To be united with Him is virtue

Q After all, the sinless state is what prevents us from committing sin Is it not?

Ramdas We will never commit sin when we are one with God Sin is born of our separation from God, which means the same as separation from our fellow-beings Because of this feeling of separation one inflicts pain and sorrow on others Hate gives rise to a sense of separation, which is therefore sin.

Q Are there many lives for an individual, I mean rebirth?

Ramdas Ramdas is concerned with this life He has no thought of the past or of the future

Q What about Ramana Maharshi?

Ramdas He is a great soul

Q. How about his teachings?

Ramdas They are very grand. Ramdas has met him

NEED FOR PURITY

Q Is realisation of God forbidden to those who are married?

Ramdas Absolute purity and Brahmacharya are essential for realisation

Q Gandhiji started leading a life of celibacy when he was thirtysix years old

Ramdas He became a celibate from an early period of his life Brahmacharya means to be established in Brahman You should be always God-conscious In this consciousness there is no idea of sex, for, in it there is no sense of duality Then where is the question of sex? If you want to raise yourself to that high spiritual plane of absolute freedom from sex consciousness, you must not see persons in terms of 'woman' or 'man' You must see in them only the absolute Truth, the Atman which is nameless and formless You can do so only when you rise above the body idea

THE WORLD TEACHERS

Q What do you think of Krishnamurti?

Ramdas Ramdas has not met him, but he has read some of his books He always speaks from the standpoint of the Absolute, Impersonal Truth He is a great teacher In essence, what all the great teachers of the world say is the same thing Only in the way they express, we see some difference But we need not take it into consideration What they aim at is to awaken humanity to the highest Truth and make them see the Divine everywhere Really, the object of all great spiritual masters is to direct man to his source, which is immortal and in which there is perfect peace, bliss and freedom The nature of that source is universal They do not make any distinction between man and man, nation and nation, country and country These great teachers are universalists. They have come to teach not only the present generation but also the future ones For all time they stand as beacon-lights for struggling souls

RISE ABOVE THE HUMAN

Q How can we keep ourselves away from the contact of those who represent for us evil?

Ramdas Raise yourself beyond the human to the higher spiritual plane by constant communion with God,—the Divine within you Then evil influences will not affect you In other words, take refuge in the Divine within you and He will protect you

Q A man who is attacked by evil forces should guard himself from such attacks How can he do it?

Ramdas If he takes refuge in God, God will protect him That is sufficient

Q Is love of humanity a sufficient shield against evil?

Ramdas Love, not of mere humanity, but of God in humanity

THE DIVINE MOTHER

Q What do the Indians mean exactly by the words 'Divine Mother'?

Ramdas The Universal Prakriti or Nature is represented by the Divine Mother The power working everywhere is symbolised by the image of the Mother

Ramdas shall tell you something about it We speak of God's will and God's power as active in the world and active in us That means, the universal power of this nature is active in us It is this power that makes us work and talk and move about and do everything When we recognise this truth, the ego-sense,—'I am the doer'—naturally disappears This is called surrender to the Divine Mother The Divine Mother is the Divine Shakti or power active in the universe and active in us It is not that we are active ourselves, but it is that divine power that is active in and through us

If we know this truth, then the sense of actorship in us will disappear When that has disappeared, we shall know we are one with the Universal Spirit By this realisation attained by our surrender to the divine power, we see we are not only one with the all-pervading, still and calm Spirit, God, but also one with His manifestation, that is the nature around us We feel oneness not only through the Spirit but also through the body

SEEING GOD EVERYWHERE

That is what is meant by our seeing God everywhere; seeing all forms with the knowledge that they are the manifestations of the Spirit There is nothing else besides the Spirit You can

take, for instance, a lump of gold out of which you can make so many ornaments All the ornaments are separately named and formed, but they are all made out of the one gold lump Only in names and forms are they different So also out of one immortal Essence, the whole universe has come out All forms and beings are the expressions of that Essence. So they are not different If you see only the names and forms, they seem to be separate, as mere names and forms mislead and make us see separation If you see the substratum behind, or the basic truth, then they are all seen as one

Q Besides individual work done for helping spiritual evolution, what do you think about the evolution that men undergo through social work?

Ramdas Every work, when done in the name of God and for the sake of God, will take one to that highest realisation People say we can do sinful actions in the name of God But this is impossible if we really think of God, then we are incapable of committing any sin We sin only because we forget God For having a continuous remembrance of God, it is necessary that we should take His holy Name constantly That will keep up an awareness of God within us and there will be a constant stream of His remembrance in our mind All our action will then be a spontaneous outflow and there will be no sin committed by us

HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS

Q What about temptations?

Ramdas When we fall under temptation, it shows that we are weak-minded and that our heart is not with God So, to overcome temptations we must with all our heart remember Him and take shelter in Him and thereby derive inner strength to resist temptation A man who is weak becomes strong when he contacts himself with God, when he communes himself with God God is the reservoir of infinite strength and power, and when you remember Him you will be surcharged with that strength and power With that power you will be able to control your mind, and thereby control your circumstances outside and then you will never fall under temptation

Q Is the Name of God sufficient?

Ramdas Remembrance of God through the Name gives us His vision and experience Suppose you have some money in your pocket and you have forgotten everything about it As

soon as you remember it, you feel the sense of security that you have got it So also the remembrance of God makes you feel His presence within you and that gives you unusual strength and courage

THE SOHAM MANTRA

Q From the practical point of view, what is the Mantra one should repeat?

Ramdas You may say 'I am God! I am God!'—'Soham!', 'Soham!' When you say that you are God, it means that God is within you and you and God are not different

Q When I am not conscious of my oneness with God, how can I repeat it?

Ramdas If you repeat the Mantra constantly you will realise your oneness with God, and when you have realised oneness, repetition is not necessary

CONTACT SAINTS

Q As regards repetition of the Name, until one has attained a certain degree of progress, it is exceedingly difficult to practise it, especially for those leading the Western mode of life

Ramdas You must do it with all your heart, with great devotion and love for the Name, because the Name and God are not different His name should be uttered in that spirit The moment you utter like that, you will experience the bliss of the Divine, just as you experience the sweetness of the lozenge the moment you put it into your mouth As God is all peace and bliss, you enjoy the bliss and peace the moment you repeat His Name When such a spirit of love and devotion to God is lacking, the Name does not sound sweet Therefore it is said that we must contact great souls, and through their contact our faith in God will increase We feel the sweetness of the Name when Grace flows to us from saints

Q That is the most difficult thing for us in Europe as we do not meet saints here at every street corner

Ramdas When you earnestly wish to meet them, they even come to you. The difficulty with people of the West and also of the East is that they do not love God with all their heart This condition has first to be fulfilled A miser's love for money is greater than his love for anything else in the world The very thought of money gives him joy Similarly, only if we have

love for God above everything else in the world, His Name will be very sweet to us

LIVING CONTACT ESSENTIAL

Q If we are unable to contact great souls here, can we have contact with them through their works?

Ramdas It is better to contact a living soul That is better than trying to draw inspiration through their books, or the books of the great saints of the past Whenever it is possible, it is better to meet a saint who can talk to you, who can see you and who can be seen by you By such a living contact great help is received

Q Does one prevent the other? Can we not do both?

Ramdas By all means.

OPEN YOUR HEART TO SAINTS

Q But we do not have saints here We do not know where they are Nobody cares to see them

Ramdas To recognise saints you must have some qualities in you The intellect is ordinarily too much at work. When we go before a saint, we must keep down the intellect and open the heart The windows of the heart must be opened to receive the influence that subtly comes to you from saints It enlivens and awakens you Then only you will be benefited by their contact, by their presence and by their talks

Q According to you, are there sages in the West?

Ramdas Surely, there are sages in all parts of the world

Q You told us in Geneva that you have come to meet them

Ramdas. Whenever there is an opportunity for Ramdas to meet a saint, he would go and meet him He would see as many saints as possible

Q Would you write a third book about your contact with saints?

Ramdas. Ramdas started it, but it could not be completed

A SERVANT OF GOD

Q Would you like to meet Shantidas who stays in Niza?

Ramdas From here we have to go back to Geneva and thence to Germany and so on. Ramdas goes wherever God takes him. He brought him here to talk to you all about Him and make you remember Him Ramdas is not a Teacher he

is not a great Guru He is only a servant of you all The word 'Ramdas' means the servant of God 'Ram' is God, 'Das' is servant

Q Have you not deceived us?

Ramdas Then you must be knowing Ramdas better than himself!

Q. You have done so much good, at least for me I found it difficult till now to repeat God's Name Now I repeat 'Ram', 'Ram', and I find great joy in doing so

Ramdas If you repeat God's Name with an attitude of total surrender to God you will get pure joy out of such repetition

Q Will repetition of God's Name allow one to resolve the inner conflicts?

Ramdas Conflicts will not not only resolve but dissolve

PLACE OF DISCRIMINATION

Q Your path is obedience to God Where does discrimination come in?

Ramdas Discrimination is applied to know that our life is intended to be offered up to the Divine in its entirety, to see the difference between the perishable and the imperishable, the eternal and the non-eternal After you have decided that your life is entirely to be dedicated to God, so that you may hold continuous communion with Him and realise His glory and greatness, your intellect should cease to function. It must be asked to take rest, and the heart must open its gate You must offer all the adoration of your heart to God Thereafter your life is lived for the sake of God alone, your remembrance is always of Him, and your tongue will be continuously chanting His name, and your actions will be automatically dedicated to Him Because, thereafter you will not be doing any action from the individual standpoint. The Divine within you will be acting through you spontaneously, for the good of all around you You will be enjoying a rare ecstasy and peace

LIMITATIONS OF THE INTELLECT

The intellect helps you to know that you do not know anything You must have heard the definition of knowledge given by Socrates, — 'To know that you do not know anything is knowledge' What do we know, after all? What does our poor intellect know about the vast mysterious universe before us?

We may have discovered something here and something there, and we think we know much But we forget that there is infinity We are incapable of gauging how and why things happen, then we stand aghast to see the wonderful creation We now humble ourselves before God and say 'Oh God, Your power is wonderful To know You with my poor intellect is impossible' As soon as this realisation comes, we are illumined It is the intellect that keeps us away from God

Q You are teaching the same thing as the Bible, which says 'Try to discover the realm of God and the rest will be given to you'

Ramdas Yes, Ramdas teaches the path of self-surrender,—surrender of our will to God's will That is the easiest way we can realise Him, and His glory and greatness can be revealed in our heart

VALUE OF SUFFERING

Q How do you explain suffering?

Ramdas Suffering has its invaluable use in the world Let us take our own suffering into consideration By the suffering we pass through, we grow to higher and higher stages in our life Suffering is necessary for our spiritual growth, even as manure is necessary for the growth of a plant So, sorrow and suffering should not be avoided, but accepted as willed by the Divine to take us nearer the ultimate Truth, which is the goal of our life Comforts and pleasures of life come and go. The aim of life is to enjoy everlasting happiness Suffering helps us greatly in progressing on the path that leads us to the supreme achievement

Q We agree and are willing to suffer What about those who are not able to accept sufferings?

Ramdas They must be made to see the good in suffering and that can be done only by our loving advice By loving words tell them that God has sent suffering in order to purify them Suffering relates to the perishable things of life We are after the immortal Universal Spirit and so suffering must be borne patiently by us We must triumph over it by continuously remembering God When we reach a higher stage of consciousness, we find suffering is given to us by the Divine to take us near Him.

MISERY IS MENTAL

Q What about the people who live in misery?

Ramdas They must be told that misery is an attitude of the mind Supposing something is lost, we feel unhappy because we are attached to that thing If we keep our mind calm and serene and feel that God gave and God Himself took away what was lost, we shall not feel unhappy It is the attitude of our mind that is responsible for our sense of happiness and misery When the mind is in tune with God, we shall be above the petty pleasures and pains of the world Further, what is felt as happiness at one time is felt as suffering at another time There is no absolute standard to measure happiness and misery When the mind is in tune with God, we rise above the movements of the world and their reactions Misery and happiness are relative terms Misery is the outcome of an uncontrolled and undisciplined mind which has no faith in God

HAPPINESS IS WITHIN

Q When we go and tell people that they must bear all the sufferings as they, after all, are attitudes of their own mind, will they not say we are talking nonsense?

Ramdas No A man may be materially well supplied Still he may be unhappy Ramdas has seen millionaires who were unhappy They came to Ramdas when he was a wandering mendicant They had no happiness though they had wealth, motor cars and all the worldly comforts they could think of They came and asked Ramdas how they could be happy They were unhappy because their mind was not in tune with God So also a poor man struggling for his very existence, if he is in tune with God, can be happy What had Jesus with him? Nothing! Buddha renounced everything and became a mendicant and was blissful There are many instances of that type Internal happiness does not depend upon external conditions.

Q I understand that well But what is the use of suffering to people who do not know why they are suffering?

Ramdas We must know, rather, how to get rid of suffering Why and how it came is not our concern A bird that is caught in a cage does not worry how and why it came there It only struggles to get out of it So, what we have to do is to see how we can get out of the suffering That path has been shown by the great teachers It is by remembering God constantly Then

we can have the peace that passeth all understanding

REASON CANNOT GRASP THE INFINITE

Q Why are men on earth?

Ramdas Why should they not be?

Q There must be some reason for it

Ramdas To find out the cause for the doings of the Infinite, your reason cannot in any way help you Reason can reason out only things on the relative plane Why God does anything, you cannot understand

Q What is it that pushes men towards God? What is the reason? And why should one strive for God?

Ramdas Man wants real happiness and in search of that happiness he turns to God

Q There are many people who suffer who do not know God

Ramdas They must be brought into contact with God

Q What kind of responsibility should we share in relationship with people who suffer?

Ramdas Render them loving service

THE BEST FORM OF SERVICE

Q What is the best service we can do for them?

Ramdas They must be given spiritual knowledge, and side by side, have their material wants supplied as far as it lies within our power There are three kinds of gifts, — of food, learning and spiritual wisdom In Sanskrit these are called *Anna-dana, Vidya-dana* and *Jnana-dana* First is the gift of food If you give good to the hungry one, his happyness lasts only for a few hours The person who received the gift will be hungry again Next comes gift of learning We can give education to one by which he can earn his livelihood so that he will get his food every day Still, that too will not satisfy him He will be restless He will be really happy only by gaining spiritual wisdom So the gift of spiritual knowledge is the best By this his hunger for everything will be perfectly appeased

Q If I am not able to give it?

Ramdas Give whatever is possible for you to give

Q· What is the best method of giving spiritual knowledge?

Ramdas Serve your fellowmen selflessly and move freely

with them By so doing you will infuse spirituality in them Such a life will reflect upon their souls and awaken them to the consciousness of their inner Divinity

SCIENCE SHOULD NOT BE ABUSED

Q Do you condemn the scientific advancement that has transformed the West completely?

Ramdas When the scientific inventions are used for the good of humanity, it is good They should never be used for destructive purposes Scientists have done great benefit to humanity But at the same time they have also invented things like atom bombs They have thereby abused science Science is not to blame, but the people who make use of it that way are to blame

Q It you do not condemn science, it means you have the confidence that humanity will use science only for good purposes

Ramdas Certainly We are going towards a state of ultimate peace and harmony on earth

THE GLOW OF FREEDOM

Q Do you think there is any spiritual problem involved in colonial policy?

Ramdas. It is both political and spiritual Freedom must be there for all people to develop as they like along lines which God has chalked out for them None should withhold that freedom from them, whether it is France, South Africa or any other nation India is now free and you can see the glow of that freedom shining in the face of the people They now feel they can raise their head erect before the people of other nations To keep a nation under subjection is not good

Q What about the outcaste problem? In Europe also there are outcastes

Ramdas We have the untouchability problem in India In Europe there are classes So far as we are concerned, let there be no doubt that we must allow others to move on equal terms with us We must wipe oft all distinctions of high and low Each one is great in his own place In India the problem of untouchability has been greatly solved Gandhiji worked hard towards its elimination The old differences have almost gone They may still be existing in some remote villages here and there There also they are gradually disappearing

Q Are they allowed to touch you?

Ramdas There are absolutely no such restrictions in the Ashram where all sit together and eat God has given Ramdas the vision by which he finds no difference In the Ashram all are alike. There are so many kinds of people coming there and those who have stayed there for some time know we are living together freely, without observing any distinction

Q India has gone forward In Europe also we have made progress We have removed the different classes in buses, and in trains also we are going to do the same thing

Ramdas That is a very good sign All must come together the aristocrats and the commoners

A MESSAGE OF EQUALITY

Q Please give us a message

Ramdas What message can Ramdas give you now? He feels one with you all and he has no words to express his joy Do not think he is a foreigner amongst you The whole world belongs to one family Let us live in that feeling and enjoy true peace and bliss True peace and bliss come only out of unity All these distinctions are man-made God made us all alike All human beings are equals Let us all behave and move with one another in that spirit of equality and bring about harmony and peace in this distracted world Let us do away with all artificial distinctions by mutual brotherly feelings and live harmoniously, making a heaven of this earth

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA,
28th August 1954

PAY THE FULL PRICE

Q Tell me how I may love God as I ought to love Him

Ramdas You must love God with all your heart That is the way to love Him There should be no reservation in your love It should be integral and complete In other words, you should have none in the world whom you love so much as Him Attachment to objects of the world does not enable you to give God your entire heart What God wants is your whole love poured out to Him Your mind, senses and body should be laid at His feet just as you offer a full flower to Him Your aim is that you should find Him within you and His light, love, peace and power be revealed in you This is possible only by a total dedication of your life to Him Now, listen to a story

A STORY

There was once a merchant who had a pearl necklace for sale A customer came and asked him what was the price of the necklace The merchant said that the price was one thousand francs The buyer started haggling He demanded the ornament for seven hundred and fifty francs The merchant refused to sell it for less than one thousand francs "I cannot give you the necklace without payment of its full price" he said But the customer wanted it for 900, 950, 975 and lastly 999 francs The merchant did not part with it for anything less than one thousand francs The customer, in order to have the necklace, had to pay the full price for it

So also, God demands of you the full price before He can be yours Verily, God is priceless None can get Him without paying anything but the full price, that is, your entire being in all its aspects In fact, dedication of one life is nothing, compared to the absolute freedom, peace and joy you get from Him Even millions of lives offered to Him are only meagre recompense for the unimaginably precious and magnificent reward you get

You know, if you want to pass a thread through the eye of a needle, you have to twist together all the fibres of it to a point

and then only will the thread get through the eye If even one single fibre sticks out, the thread cannot pass So if you reserve a single desire, — even a petty one — in your surrender to the Divine, you cannot have Him All your desires must converge and concentrate on Him Then alone your prayer will be accepted by Him and fulfilled This is the pre-condition for inheriting His glory, power, light, joy and peace

THE WAY TO LIBERATION

Q How can one find one's way to liberation, living in Europe?

Ramdas One can find God wherever one is, — whether in Europe, America, India or any other country — because God is ever within us all He is not to be sought outside Search within and you will find Him God is the life of our life, the breath of our breath, the very basis of our existence If you only remember Him constantly with all love, you will find Him in the very place where you are What is essential is a keen aspiration to see and realise Him

Q How to destroy Karma — by Pranayama, Asana or Karma Yoga?

Ramdas It is not Karma or action which is to be destroyed, but the sense of doership The feeling 'I am the doer' must go Then you are free from the fetters of Karma So long as you think you are the doer, you are caught in the toils of action When you know that you are a mere instrument and that His power or will alone works through you, you are free from the bondage of action By surrendering yourself to God, you can eliminate the ego-sense which is responsible for your feeling that you are the doer, and realise you are doing all actions only as prompted by the divine power This is called liberation Your actions now flow spontaneously from you In the words of a Bhakta, you will say "God is making me talk, walk and do all actions according to His sweet will"

All spiritual practices, Ramdas reiterates are done with the sole aim of surrendering yourself to Him Pranayama is one discipline Asana is a pose or posture you assume for meditation These disciplines are part of the Yoga called Raja Yoga A devotee's surrender to God is easy, smooth, quick and natural The path of the devotee is direct and simple The devotee does

good to all and harms none There is no strain of action left behind He enjoys eternal bliss and peace

YOU MAKE YOUR OWN DESTINY

Q How is it that while you are so highly advanced spiritually, I am not? Do you think that it is due to my previous Karma?

Ramdas You have really made yourself what you are You are the maker of your own destiny, the architect of your own fortune If you remember God always and surrender yourself to Him, you will attain liberation, peace and joy If you choose to remain in ignorance, do not aspire for the knowledge and vision of God, and thereby undergo sufferings, you are yourself responsible for it As the saying goes 'We make our bed and lie on it',— a bed of thorns or of roses If you do not take hold of the proffered hand of God, but wish to remain in the valley of sorrow, who is to blame for it? Yourself alone With God-consciousness, there is freedom and joy for us Without it, there is only darkness and grief The choice is left to you, either to attain bliss, or to be sunk in pain and sorrow

SAINTS COME FROM ALL CLASSES

Q How is it that a child is born in circumstances that are conducive to his becoming a spiritual leader, while another has the misfortune of being born in wicked circles? How can you say that the conditions in which the two are born were brought about by their own merits or demerits?

Ramdas There are two answers to your question There are some children born in the worst environments Still, they rise above the ordinary run of men and reach the highest spiritual goal There are, on the other hand, some who, though born in favourable circumstances, have degraded themselves and live a life of misery, in complete forgetfulness of God God's ways are inscrutable We cannot solve this problem with the aid of our poor intellect Our sole duty is to know where we stand, whither we should go and how to reach the goal To question ourselves or others about the why and wherefore of things, without attempting to realise our life's aim, would be sheer waste of energy and time Setting aside such questions, we must look ahead and walk up to the goal with steady and

unfaltering steps, our heart full of devotion and hope fixed firmly on our Eternal Beloved

SPIRITUALITY IN DAILY LIFE

Q How do you consider it possible to harmonise the spiritual with the practical?

Ramdas How can you separate the spiritual from the practical? Spirituality that cannot be applied in actual life is no spirituality It is something else God is in the world and is acting through everyone of us We have to know this God-realisation does not mean disappearing into some unknown realm beyond the world True spirituality consists in our living in this world, moving in it and serving all beings, all the time being conscious of the Divine within us and everywhere around us When a man seeks God and by so doing begins to feel His presence, he finds out that more than his seeking God, God is seeking him God is all kindness and compassion. He does all things for our good and our real welfare consists in knowing Him and feeling that by His will we are active He is in us, not merely as the static Spirit, but also as the dynamic Power, making use of us as His instruments for carrying out His plan in the world

KARMA YOGA

Q What is Karma Yoga?

Ramdas It means doing Karma in a state of Yoga or union with God Our actions become pure and yield true joy when we know our life is a divine expression God enters into every action of ours and fills us with His light and consciousness Some people may think that simply sitting silent in a state of meditation is an end in itself, as it grants them spiritual light But spiritual light and joy gained in meditation must be brought to the physical plane if our entire life should be fully divinised

Q You said that one should attain this identification with God by complete selflessness To what extent should this be practised in order that we may be rid of the worldly way? I think ninety nine per cent of the population is faced with the problems of food and self-preservation

WHY THE WORLD IS UNHAPPY

Ramdas The struggle for food and self-preservation is there because we are living a divided life, separated from God If you

are united with God and love all your fellow-beings, you will be perennially happy and all your actions will be done in a spirit of service The world is unhappy as it has forgotten God,—God who is within you and in the hearts of all beings If love inspires the life of mankind, there will be plenty in the world, all will be well provided for, and there will be no want You have created this struggle and want by your ill-regulated selfish life The canker that eats into the vitals of humanity is the greed for accumulating wealth without regard to all the suffering and starvation caused by it

If you are all unselfish and have love for your fellow-beings, there will be no reason for anybody to be unhappy and miserable Man's selfishness is the root-cause of all troubles Don't you think so? What a heaven you can make of this earth if only you strive in the right way! The unselfish man, you know, is inwardly happy When you are not happy, but are discontented, you cannot be kind, loving and generous to your neighbours When love and joy enter the heart of even the worst of misers, through the grace of God, he gives away his wealth freely for the good of humanity and earns everlasting blessedness If all those who have hoarded wealth spend it for the good of others,—by finding employment for the unemployed, and giving food for the starving, protection for the destitute, and relief for the diseased,—the face of the earth, which is now far from happy, will be transformed into brightness, cheer and joy

WAY TO A HAPPY WORLD

Happiness does not consist in storing or accumulating wealth You bring nothing with you when you come into the world and you take nothing with you when you leave it The wealth, name, fame and glory you earn—all these you have to leave behind There is a story about Alexander the Great, who amassed vast wealth by waging wars with other countries and looting the people He was a powerful king,—greedy, selfish and cruel In his time he was considered to be the richest man on earth When death was nearing, he reflected within himself "I have committed so many evil deeds to amass all this wealth Now death's call has come When departing, I have to leave all the riches behind and go alone without taking a single coin" He told his courtiers and followers "When my body is taken to the grave, you have to see that my two hands are stretched out, with palms

open, and fully exposed, while the rest of the body is covered, so that my subjects may see that I, a great king, the richest man in the world, went on my final journey, quite empty-handed, as I could not take anything with me"

Such is the fate of all those who cling to material objects Whatever God gives you is meant for His service This does not mean that you should deprive yourself and your dependents of the normal comforts and necessaries of life God sometimes gives us more than we need, so that we may also serve our fellow-beings who are outside the circle of our family and are in distress If all of us keep this ideal before us, we shall have a truly happy world This applies equally to all countries Equality is the foundation of happiness Find joy within yourself,—the joy which is God—and all good things will follow as a matter of course

GENEVA,
28th August 1954

THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT

Q How can we explain the illness of men who lead a proper life and are highly spiritual? How can illness appear in such bodies? Or, are bodily health and spiritual development quite separate and independent?

Ramdas Body is different from the spirit The body is subject to changes, but the inner Spirit which we call the Atman, Oversoul, or God within us, is unchanging The body is subject to birth growth, disease and death, but this is not true of the Atman So when the body perishes, the Atman does not perish To realise that we are the Atman is the goal of spiritual endeavour We are striving to know that we are not the body but the Spirit within, which is immortal When we know this, we are free from the bondage of the body and we dwell in God

When the shirt that you are putting on is torn, you do not say that you are torn Similarly, when the body suffers, do not say 'I suffer' We should not identify ourselves with the body Even in common parlance we say, 'my body' That means we are not the body When I say 'my coat', it is clear that I am not the coat The term 'my mind' itself indicates that I am not the mind In the same way, 'my intellect' means I am not the intellect, and 'my senses' means I am not the senses I am something superior to all these things, because I am the possessor of these things Thus we find that we are not the body, we are not the mind, we are not the intellect, we are not the senses Then what are we? Let us try to find that out Let us realise that we are the Spirit, residing not only in one body, but everywhere An immortal thing cannot be an individual thing It must be a universal thing, all-pervading, nameless and formless Then alone can it be real, eternal

But this body, mind, intellect and senses are all individual and relative in their nature They have a beginning and an end The Spirit that dwells within us, which we call God, is all-pervading, eternal, beginningless and endless Remaining conscious always of this Truth, we should lead this life Then we shall act according to the will of that Spirit, always in the right way, never in a wrong way We go astray when we do things

with a sense of separation from our fellow-beings. When we realise the Truth, which is one, that sense of separation disappears and we work in unison with all people. We then bring about harmony and peace among people and ward off discord and dissension. For, then our actions are absolutely unselfish. When we indentify ourselves with the Reality, our love for others is based upon that Reality. We love each other with the awareness that the Spirit within us and others is the same. When this Truth is not realised, we may love each other, but we may expect some return or response for our love. In that case we cannot be true servants of God in humanity who give comfort and joy to everybody without expecting any reward.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO WAR

Q. May I know how the law of Karma works when the collective interest has to be above individual interest, as, for instance, during war, when we are enlisted as soldiers and are made to kill?

Ramdas: There are conscientious objectors to war. They will not join war in any circumstances. Even the State cannot force a man against his will. If you do not wish to join the army that is mobilised for killing people, you may refuse and be prepared to take the punishment that may be imposed upon you for your refusal. In that case, so far as you are concerned, you will not be committing any action which, you know, will recoil on you with tremendous force. For that matter, if all people join together and say 'We do not want to fight', no power on earth can force them to fight. Thereby we shall be asserting our spiritual and moral strength.

SIMPLE PRAYER IS THE BEST

Q. Should we pray to God?

Ramdas: Yes, we have to pray, all of us. Prayer is the only way by which we can keep contact with God, opening a channel between ourselves and Him. Prayer is the means to make His power, light, glory and purity flow into us.

Q. Could you teach us some prayer?

Ramdas: Prayer need not be a long-drawn one. It should be simple as the child speaking to the mother. We can place before Him our hearts' longing and that longing should be to realise Him, to feel His presence within us and everywhere about

us We can say, 'Oh Lord, make me pure in thought, word and deed by revealing Yourself in my heart!' This is the only prayer we need offer before God, and if He, by His grace, grants this prayer, we become supremely blessed, our life is elevated, illumined and filled with divine peace and joy A simple prayer is the best prayer It must be essentially for our spiritual liberation Jesus has rightly said, 'Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven' The Kingdom of Heaven is verily within us It means the kingdom of happiness, of eternal peace and joy

HOW TO PURIFY THE SAMSKARAS

Q What are Samskaras and how can we change them?

Ramdas 'Samskara' means the accumulated effect or impressions on the mind of our past actions If we always think of God who is all power, all love and all peace, the mind will get the Samskara of always remembering God If we practise talking gently, with loving and soothing words, then, we will get the Samskara of always talking gently and lovingly to all fellow-beings If our body is accustomed to serve others, in all humility, for relieving their distress, as we go on doing such service, we get that Samskara Naturally, evil thoughts, evil talks and evil deeds produce evil Samskaras To purify the Samskaras, the mind must always be kept in tune with God Then our words and actions will become pure and flow out of pure love Our thoughts will revolve on God and think of nothing else Our 'Vrittis' will become divine 'Vritti' means movement or activity

Buddha has explained beautifully the things we have to discard in order to attain perfect purity in thought, word and deed He has said that the mind of man is subject to three evils,—scepticism, envy and wrath The tongue commits four evils,—telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping The body commits three evils,—killing, stealing and adultery Altogether there are ten evils and these are symbolised by the ten heads of Ravana Ravana is the Asuric ego within us Who killed Ravana? Rama—God So, if you repeat Ramnam constantly, all these evils will disappear and you will be pure in thought, word and deed

Q It is sometimes necessary to pretend that you are angry

Ramdas There is such a thing as righteous indignation If somebody is repeatedly committing a mistake, you may pretend to be angry in order to mend matters and make things go on the right way It is not actual anger It is only a reprimand ad-

ministered to a person at the right time, to correct him

Q Do you take medicines when the body is ill?

Ramdas Yes

Q While taking medicines, are you not conscious of the body?

Ramdas When the body is hungry, you feed it Similarly, when your body is ill, you give it medicine

BHAKTI YOGA

Q Would you like to tell us something about Bhakti Yoga, the Lila of God and also about Art?

Ramdas: Bhakti Yoga means uniting ourselves with God through devotion, dedication and surrender There are two kinds of devotion—'Sakama' and 'Nishkama'. Sakama Bhakti is devotion to God in order to get from Him certain worldly gifts Nishkama Bhakti is desireless devotion which makes us see Him, realise Him and feel His presence always The better of the two is Nishkama Bhakti

Every being on the face of this earth is striving to get happiness; but so long as the search for happiness is external, he does not get it He must seek within If he is devoted to the Truth within himself, and through such devotion constantly remembers God, making the heart and mind thoroughly pure, he will realise that within himself dwells the eternal Beloved, whose nature is pure bliss and peace So, by becoming one with God, he enjoys eternal peace and bliss He merges his little individuality in the cosmic personality of God

Just as a miser is devoted to money, we must be devoted to God The miser does not require any practice to remember money Love of money makes him remember it constantly So also, if we bear true love for God, that love will make us remember Him continuously It is like the love of a mother for her baby in the cradle If the baby cries, she at once hears it, even though she may be engrossed in work in the kitchen, even though other people in the house may not hear the cry The mother hears the child because her love is directed fully towards it Her whole heart is with the child because of her intense love So also, if we love God more than everything else in the world, we shall have a continuous stream of His remembrance running in our mind

ANANYA BHAKTI

This one-pointed devotion is called 'Ananya-Bhakti' It is a Sanskrit word which means exclusive devotion to God as the highest object of love If we have such devotion, our mind continuously runs towards Him out of pure love, just as the mother's thought continously runs to her baby We ever think of our eternal Beloved dwelling in our heart so that we can realise Him, see Him, feel our union with Him Devotion must be of the purest type, without a desire for anything but God

When we have realised our oneness with Him, then naturally we behold him everywhere about us We first see Him within, and then find the whole universe filled with His presence Our vision will change because God seated in our heart will enable us to see Him everywhere in the universe of beings and creatures which will stand revealed as the manifestation or expression of the Divine seen within This experience is considered to be the highest in spiritual attainment

THE WORLD ISALILA OF GOD

It is now we look upon the whole world as a Lila of the Lord We stand apart, seeing that the whole universe is filled by His presence and that by His power all things are happening in the world In a state of complete surrender to the will of God, our ego disappears and we feel identified with the all-pervading, static, silent Spirit which we know is our Self As such we witness with detachment the manifestations which are before us and the power that is active in them We are the spectators and we are the players! We are one not only with the Universal Spirit but also one with the universal manifestation This is the highest attainment in which the sense of duality, the sense of separation from the rest of the people in the world, disappears completely The ecstasy that we get then cannot be described We are merged in that ecstasy day and night We act, work, talk and do everything in that ecstasy We do not remain idle We pour ourselves out in words and actions and fill everybody who comes near us with love and joy

THE UNIVERSE IS A WORK OF GOD'S ART

The whole universe is the work of God's art To anything that we see, we do not give any particular importance as different from the rest of the world But we see the whole universe equally as the manifestation of God, everything a beautiful manifestation

When Ramdas once went to Kashmir, which compares favourably with Switzerland, he used to be wandering alone on the hills, sit on the peak of some hill and look around him. He got bewitched by the scenery that was before him. The Divine was seen pervading everywhere in all aspects of nature,—in hills, trees, plants, lakes and everywhere. Ramdas used to sit there in rapture for hours together, absorbed in the super-conscious existence pervading in all creatures, beings and things that were seen before him. He found himself then in tune with the universe and the Universal Spirit. There was nothing to reject.

RISE ABOVE GOOD AND EVIL

Everything has a beauty of its own, because in everything dwells the Divine. There is nothing ugly. The entire universe is a beautiful expression, beautiful manifestation, beautiful form of the Divine. In a picture there are dark shades and bright, and the dark shades have importance because the bright ones have no value without them. So also are good and evil revelations of the Divine. There is a place for everything in the manifestation. We have to transcend the sense of duality and the sense of opposites. We must transcend these pairs of opposites and dwell in a plane from where we see everything as divine. Then we love good men and bad men. So many are brought before Ramdas as bad men. Ramdas does not see anything bad in any of them. God is everywhere and therefore we can love everybody.

When we love one person we are happy. When we love many people we are happier. If we love everyone, millions and millions, how infinitely more happy we should be! Man's happiness depends upon his attitude towards the things of the world. Therefore the state that our mind has to attain is that it should rise above these conceptions of good and evil.

We take a beautiful picture and keep it in our hand admiring it a few minutes. Afterwards we do not like to look at it, however beautiful it may be. We keep it at a distance, may be upside down. The same thing loved at one time is not loved at another time. How fickle our mind is! It plays tricks and makes us pass through the whirlpool of likes and dislikes! So also with sweetness. What in the beginning we took with great relish is not liked after a few minutes. It is not the object that makes us like and dislike it, but it is the mind that is responsible

for our likes and dislikes.

The joy within us reflects upon the object we enjoy, and we say that it is sweet. Otherwise, how is it that when we have fever we say that even sugar put into our mouth is bitter? Taste lies in our tongue. The joy is within us. A dog, for instance, is given a dry bone. It goes on biting it even though there is no juice or marrow in it. After some time, its teeth begin to bleed. The blood drips on the bone and the dog licks it with joy, all the time thinking that some juice is coming out of the bone. But it is its own blood that it is licking.

A man was passing on the road and saw a blind man. He wanted to take the blind man home for dinner. But as he had to go in a hurry he told the blind man to come to his house and have dinner with him. He went to his wife and asked her to have one more meal prepared as he had invited a blind man for dinner. She replied that she would prepare two extra meals. When asked why two instead of one, she said, "The blind man will not come alone, he will be led by another man."

SEEK WITHIN FOR JOY

So, whenever we want happiness through objects of the senses, let us not think that happiness will come alone to us. Misery is sure to follow. We must be prepared to enjoy both. Joy born of material things is always mixed with sorrow. The objects of the senses cannot give us unmixed happiness. This is the experience of every one of us. Therefore we must rise above these likes and dislikes, enter within ourselves, find the source of joy within, and then look at the whole universe as divine to find it filled with light, joy and peace. We have none to hate, none to be inimical to. Our love should go to everybody alike with the same intensity. What a sublime state we shall have attained then! That is what we are here for,—not to be caught up in this body, calling somebody a friend and somebody else a foe, with the mind always on the rack and filled with thoughts and desires that burn it. We may be rich, we may have plenty of everything, but when the mind is not in tune with God, the Truth that pervades everywhere, we shall be constantly subjected to fits of despondency, worry, fear and sorrow. This is true of every one of us.

SEE THE WORLD AS IT IS

Q· When we see a work of art we say it is good or not. When we see the universe we are likely to do the same thing, and if we see anything imperfect in it we conclude that God who created the universe is not all-powerful or perfect It is our poor mind that judges this, in other words, it doubts even the Absolute

Ramdas In Ramdas' experience, the world is not imperfect Just as a man who is stricken with jaundice sees everything yellow, and after he is cured of the disease he sees things as they are, so a change of vision on our part will make us see the world as it is, viz, as nothing but God In darkness we mistake the rope for a snake When light appears we see there is no snake at all, there is only the rope Similarly, we now see the universe in our ignorance as consisting of various kinds of matter spread out and distinct from each other. But when the light of knowledge dawns on us and our ego-sense disappears, we see the universe as the expression or manifestation of God,—the one Reality,—and realise that the diversity we saw was false, caused by the ignorance that had seized us If we look at the world with an imperfect or false vision we see diversity If we look at it with a clear, illumined and purified vision, we see it as the expression of God. So, we have to change our vision

SELFISH AND SELFLESS WORK

Q· You are teaching us to free ourselves from the ego with a view to reaching the eternal, static peace But I wonder if that will not be a weakness or egoism in itself Because, if we have been brought into the world, it must be for the purpose of transforming the world In doing this, we must face the obstacles rather than seek happiness We must be engaged in productive activity

Ramdas Ramdas does not differ from you on this point But what kind of activity should we take up? Is it from the egoistic standpoint, or from the standpoint of the Divine? We can be really useful to others only when we work selflessly and when we are established in the divine consciousness So long as we are obsessed by the ego-sense we may be ostensibly working for the world, but in fact we will be working for ourselves Only when the ego is absent and we are fixed in the cosmic consciousness shall we prove to be a blessing to humanity Then our ac-

tions will be absolutely selfless as we shall have no ambition for anything in the world

Destruction of the ego-sense does not mean cessation of activity Action will continue, but from a higher plane This work will be spontaneous, giving joy to ourselves and joy to all concerned This is the real way to serve humanity and make it happy Whenever a man does selfish work, those who are associated with him suffer much A factory manager may say he has started the factory for the benefit of all But, really, it is not so He has started it for his own profit He may give work to some people, and pay them daily wages That is nothing compared to the profit he makes But when the ego is absent and when you work, established in the higher consciousness in which you do not desire anything and are contented—because you have found happiness within yourself—your work is dedicated to humanity Such work alone can bring happiness to the world

God is not merely a static and omnipresent Truth but also active in the world before us He is dynamic as well as static His power is active in the universe It has been active all the time and will ever be active We can make ourselves active instruments in His hands when we realise His absolute aspect in which there is no name, form or movement Then His universal power works through us only for the good of humanity There will be no tinge of selfishness in such work

THE ABSOLUTE IS TO BE EXPERIENCED

Q Would we not be justified in doubting the existence of the Absolute?

Ramdas Those who have realised God by knowing His static and all-pervading existence are dinning into our ears that they have actually seen and realised such a Truth This belief and experience have been handed over to us from generations, and you find that daily more and more are coming to believe in it because the pressure of external life is driving them to it The turmoil and chaos in the world is necessarily making us go deeper and deeper within us, to find the divine existence which has been held out by the sages and saints of the world as the sole objective in life We believe them because they speak from the depths of experience This is not a thing which can be argued out But the believer in sages and saints will definitely find the Truth which will release him from the turmoil

and bondage of life which have been keeping him in utter unhappiness and sorrow

FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF SAINTS

It is quite possible that a man who has never seen India or Banaras would deny its existence Such a man, left to himself, cannot have an idea of going there and so will never reach there But he can go to Banaras with the help of people who have gone to India and seen Banaras He must take their word and follow their guidance when they tell him where to embark, where to land and where to entrain, and so on So also, if we follow the guidance of the sages and saints who have attained the Absolute, we have the hope of attaining It ourselves If we doubt their assertion, we shall have no aspiration to reach the goal. The Absolute is not a matter for discussion because it transcends our senses and intellect It can only be experienced, but cannot be explained in words

Such is the case even with matters of worldly joy You eat sugar-candy and say it tastes sweet Another man who has never eaten sugar-candy cannot understand you unless he himself tastes it So also on the spiritual plane, we must ourselves experience the Truth and then only can we know what it is We might repeat the words of the scripture that God is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss But these are only words until we experience the truth All the same, the sages have said this from their own experience and so it has to be believed by us as true Without such belief it will not be possible for us to accept their guidance and reach the goal

EXPERIENCE THE ONLY CRITERION

Q The other day you said that by knowledge alone you cannot find the answer to the ultimate question If that is the case we must consider that all knowledge and replies to questions are purely relative and we are justified in doubting everything

Ramdas The Truth we are discussing is inexpressible But still we are talking about it, because by so doing we feel somehow benefited in a strange way We are talking about the inexpressible which cannot be realised by talking, or through the working of the senses By stilling the waves of the mind alone we can get at the Truth This talk is only a means by which we inwardly commune with our real Self, which is static, and try to attain our

oneness with It It helps the struggle by which the waves of the mind are stilled It is not by doubting that we can reach the goal Realising the Truth requires practice and ultimate stilling of the mind The taste of the pudding lies in its eating There may be lectures about the pudding, but they do not help you to know the taste of the pudding The Truth is there awaiting to be realised and experienced

Whatever we may talk about the Truth is only for the sake of talking Even then, we find a certain peace within us This peace brings about a certain state of stillness in the mind which may lead us to the realisation of the Truth It is with this object we are talking Or rather, we talk to make one understand that by talks alone one cannot get the experience It is said by one great saint of India, 'If you want to know God, take all the books and throw them aside, and think only of God' Swami Vivekananda put it in another way After he delivered lectures in America at the Parliament of Religions, the whole world came to know of his greatness After having given so many talks, delivered so many lectures and written so many books, he himself asked his followers not to set great value to his writings and speeches because they cannot fully describe the supreme state which one has to attain

So, what Ramdas says may or may not be believed, but you must dive deep and realise the Self We cannot define Truth which is unthinkable, indescribable and undefinable From the thought plane we cannot realise it Truth is silence The best way you can express the Truth is by means of silence When Ramdas thinks of his experience of that high state he is struck dumb Still he is made to talk about it so that interest may be created in the people to search for it Ramdas is here and goes everywhere to lay before those interested in this attainment his own experience of the path that led him to this realisation He knows that the goal, after reaching it, cannot be described to others Others must experience it for themselves But he can definitely say that the Absolute does exist because his own experience goes to confirm it He can also say definitely that it is only by reaching the Absolute that this life of bondage is set free for attaining the state of happiness and peace of the Eternal

THE TEST OF PROGRESS

Q In the different stages of the road can one check for one-

self the successive milestones one has reached, or should one be guided necessarily by somebody else?

Ramdas When the path is shown by a spiritual guide, the aspirant has to pursue it himself and find out from stage to stage how far he has progressed. The chief test of progress is eradication of low desires from the mind. As the mind gets pure, and becomes free from lust, greed and wrath, he may know that he is nearing the goal Perfect purity is an essential condition of spiritual progress Man is usually subject to gusts of passion, anger, hate, jealousy, greed and such low tendencies with the result that God seems to be far away from him. The easiest way by which you can keep your mind pure is by thinking of, and meditating on, that purest of the pure Truth dwelling within your heart

The aspirant's concern is not to see the faults in others, but watch the faults in himself and try to correct himself People are so much having their minds externalised that they only find fault with persons about them, without taking notice of their own faults and trying to eradicate them So, self-examination is essential for a Sadhaka or aspirant If he sits silently for meditation he can keep a watch over the mind and see what the mind that he is making satisfactory progress But if the mind is running remains calm and serene during meditation, he can be sure that he is making satisfactory progress. But if the mind is running after things undesirable, then he should know his progress is very slow or at a standstill He can test himself under trying conditions and see for himself the changes going on within him The best person to judge one is oneself Very often, slight external disturbances upset people and make them angry But when the mind is purified and brought under control they can face any situation and remain calm and serene The best way to purify and control the mind is by repetition of God's name which brings about a wonderful transformation

THE HERO IS HE WHO CONQUERS THE MIND

Ramdas remembers the instance of a man who was a clerk in a Collectorate He came to Ramdas and said his colleagues in the office were giving him a lot of trouble and he wanted protection Soon after he left, his colleagues came and said that this man had a very bad temper and was the source of a lot of worry for them Next day when that man again came, Ramdas asked

him to take God's name and he took it After a few days the same man came and said, 'My colleagues are now kind and good to me They are very helpful They were finding fault with me, but now they do not quarrel at all' Ramdas told him, 'As you do not quarrel with them now, their attitude too has changed towards you You have become calm yourself with the result that they have also become calm' After he left, his colleagues came again and told Ramdas that this man who was once violent had completely changed now See the transformation brought about within a few days' time by the repetition of God's name!

This is only a small instance If the Name is repeated constantly for a number of years, you can realise God—the absolute peace and truth—within you and everywhere outside you Then your mind is always in a state of complete peace It is never ruffled in any circumstances,—whether by calamities, losses or dishonour The hero is he who has conquered the mind and kept it under subjection until it gets wiped out completely and the static, calm and silent Spirit alone remains This state is so grand, so sublime, that we cannot imagine how it is like It is beyond our imagination and thought None can express what it is like It is such a state that awaits to be attained!

THE PURUSHOTTAMA

God is not merely personal or merely impersonal He is at once both personal and impersonal God as defined in the Bhagavad Gita is Purushottama, which means He is Purusha and Prakriti and He is also beyond Purusha and Prakriti Purusha is His static aspect and Prakriti His dynamic aspect He is at once static and dynamic and also beyond the static and the dynamic Purushottama means the great transcendent personality We have to unite ourselves with and surrender ourselves to such a Godhead who is all-inclusive and all-transcendent When you surrender yourself to Him and your ego is completely wiped out, then it is that you become the witness and identify yourself with the Purusha,—the static, calm and all-pervading Spirit By realising the static you also see the dynamic,—that is, the manifestation—as the play of the Divine

In this exalted state you are said to be acting and not acting, doing and not … the same time As the Purusha,—the static, calm … rit,—you are doing … Prakriti or … mic aspect, you

This statement, that you are doing and at the same time not doing anything, is not easily comprehensible. Those who base their conclusions merely on reasoning and speculation say that this is absurd. They ask, "How can you do and not do at the same time? You can say this, if at all, with reference to two different times, because you can be doing nothing at one time and be doing something at another. But how to be both simultaneously?"

PARAMASHIVA

The fact, however, is that you are static and dynamic at the same time. This state is experienced by realising the supreme Godhead who is at once static and dynamic. So the Yogis say, "I act and act not, I eat and eat not, I walk and walk not." They are perfectly right when they say that. As the static, calm Spirit they are doing absolutely nothing, but as the dynamic form, the Divine Power working through them does everything. So the whole manifestation is the dynamic or Shakti aspect. The static, calm, silent Spirit, which is the basis of this manifsetation, is the Shiva aspect. In the Tantra-Shastra He is called Paramashiva. God is Shiva and Shakti and at the same time beyond Shiva and Shakti. It is the Purushottama of the Gita, the Tantras speak of as Paramashiva. They are only two different names, but they signify the same principle or truth. It is upon this Purushottama or Paramashiva that we have to meditate. It is His Name we have to repeat. It is to Him we have to surrender. He is full, integral, the all-inclusive and all-transcendent Godhead. When you have merged yourself in Him, how would you be acting in the world? You will be one with all the manifestation and also one with the static, calm Spirit pervading it. Physically you are one, and spiritually also you are one with Him.

OUR GREAT HERITAGE

This is the great achievement which our ancient Rishis and the great Teachers and Avatars of the world have taught us. From time immemorial they have been calling upon mankind to reach that supreme state and free itself from the discord, misery and unhappiness of this world. This is the great heritage the sages have left for us. We must rise above this material plane to the divine transcendent plane and enjoy the bliss which is the birth-right they have pointed out to us. We must not live like dumb-driven cattle, enjoying sense-pleasures and pass away no

better than when we came, without making the best use of the precious human life God has granted us If we had been born as animals there would have been no chance for us of reaching our goal But the human body has been given to us in order that we may attain to that grand state You can be a light unto yourself and a light unto others The Divine that you have realised will pour out from the very core of your being and, verily, you will become vehicles of that infinite joy, peace and love

GENEVA,
29th August 1954

FROM IGNORANCE TO KNOWLEDGE

Q: What is the most important thing on the Godward path?

Ramdas: Ramdas shall tell you about the path that leads the soul to God. The first thing necessary is Grace. It is Grace that makes us long for God. Longing for God develops into constant remembrance of Him, and this gives us the vision of Him, the experience of Him. This brings us whole-hearted love for God, and this in turn enables us to behold Him,—our Beloved,—everywhere, inside and out. This is the final stage wherein the soul reaches the goal and finds complete peace, bliss and freedom. In the Hindu way of approach, three things have been described as the ascending steps from the state of ignorance to the state of comprehensive knowledge, vision and realisation of God.

First is Bhakti, which means devotion to God. The aspirant looks upon God as his father, mother, friend or master, and develops a close relationship with Him, looks to Him for his elevation, for the necessary strength to control his mind and the senses, prays to Him with all his heart for perfect purity so that he can have the knowledge and vision of God. In this state he will be struggling hard to get nearer and nearer God. By chanting His Name constantly and turning his mind entirely to God, he comes to the second stage of Vairagya or dispassion. When the heart is longing for God, the devotee wishes to think of Him always. Then automatically he is freed from the attraction for the things of the world which drags the mind away from meditation and remembrance of God. The aspirant struggles to keep his mind ever engaged in the thought of God and ever to remember Him. Whenever he forgets God, he feels utterly miserable. When the mind goes out to the objects of the senses, as it was doing before he started on his spiritual quest, he becomes most miserable, and he prays to God to give him one-pointed devotion to Him. He develops intense longing for and continuous remembrance of God, and, through that very intensity, he merges in God and realises that he and God are one. This is what is called Jnana, the third stage.

Jnana is knowledge of God, knowing that you and He are

one This is the impersonal realisation in which the duality is transcended and the devotee becomes one with God by continuous remembrance of and meditation on Him After knowing that he and God are one, still there is a step higher to be reached wherein he sees the whole universe of name and form as the expression of God This is Parabhakti

THE HIGHEST STAGE

Parabhakti is the highest state of God-realisation It is not enough if you know Him and realise Him as the impersonal Truth You have also to see Him as the vast manifestation This is the all-comprehensive realisation of God In this state you can freely move in the world, do whatever work God has entrusted you with and enjoy supreme bliss It is not rejection of life, but divinisation of life There is nothing to be renounced because everything for you now is God and God alone,—the seen and the unseen, the so-called real and the unreal, the manifest and the unmanifest, that which has name and form and that which is without name and form All these aspects you realise as one supreme Godhead This does not mean merely retiring and spending the time in solitude and meditation You come out and look upon the whole universe as God The change has to take place within you and not anywhere outside

So, these are the several stages Bhakti means devotion to God, Vairagya means dispassion towards the world, Jnana means the realisation of oneness with God, and Parabhakti is to see Him in all the manifestations before you Parabhakti is the ultimate state, the crowning experience which you get when you reach the peak of God-realisation

HOW TO GET GRACE?

Now the question is how to get Grace, which is the starting point Grace can come to us only through contact with Saints Saints who have seen God can influence us from within and turn our mind towards God So Grace flows into us through Saints God works through them for the awakening of mankind to the awareness of God So contact with a Saint is essential

Very often the question is asked how we can long for God whom we have not seen This is the problem with many aspirants There are great Saints, even now, in several parts of India, who have seen God, who definitely say that God exists, and that our

object in life is to see Him in order to obtain immortal peace, bliss and freedom. These Saints declare that they have seen God and they can show the path by which we can also walk towards Him

It is from the words of such Saints that we develop faith in God and a longing for Him, though we have not seen Him For instance, if you go to India and see a great Saint, you find peace in his company. You return to your native land and tell your friends that you have seen a great Saint by whose influence your life has changed Then, necessarily, the friends who hear the news from you will long to see that Saint although they have not seen him The friends, as a result of their constant longing to see the Saint, are brought in contact with him in a mysterious way Either the Saint comes to them, or they are made to go to him, because the intensified desire within them has a tremendous force and it will surely lead them to the object of their love God is not an object far away from us He is dwelling within us It will not be difficult to have Him if we earnestly long for Him So, Grace must first come to us through a saint so that our heart may become awakened and turn towards the Divine.

THREE KINDS OF SAMADHI

Ramdas will now speak to you about Samadhi Samadhi means absorption in the Divine, so that you can realise your oneness or identity with Him The three kinds of Samadhi are Savikalpa, Nirvikalpa and Sahaja In Savikalpa Samadhi you see your Beloved in some form,—before you, of course, outside you, —and on seeing this form you go into ecstasy You get this Samadhi in the pure state of Sattwa Guna Then comes Nirvikalpa Samadhi This makes you lose your body consciousness by getting merged in the Absolute, the all-pervading, nameless formless existence in which all sense of duality is completely lost You are so much identified with the Divine that, as a separate entity, you cease to exist In this state your senses, your mind, your feelings, your body, are all perfectly at a standstill and you are completely unconscious of them or of the world. This is called Atma-sakshatkar or realisation of the impersonal aspect of God

Next comes Sahaja Samadhi After the experience of Nirvikalpa, when the Samadhi is disturbed, you come back to

the body-consciousness, still retaining your inner awareness of the immortal state. This awareness should get stabilised. Then your entire being is filled with that joy and peace which you had experienced in Nirvikalpa. Thereafter, you live, move and have your being in God in all states, in all situations and conditions. You have no more to struggle for achieving anything, as you have attained that by gaining which you have gained everything. So your struggle has ceased here, your sadhana has come to an end. You have reached the summit of spiritual experience and as such you always are in the presence of God, always one with God, both in His personal and impersonal aspects—the personal aspect being the universal manifestation and the impersonal the all-pervading nameless, formless existence of God. You are now identified with Him in both the aspects and you always live in Him and He lives in you. You and He are one. This is Sahaja Samadhi or Sahaja Avasta. In this you cannot at any moment be deprived of His presence. You have His vision at all times and in all conditions.

In the self-absorption of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, you are conscious of Him, but, very often, as you come out of that state to the physical plane, you lose Him. But here, in Sahaja Avasta, you are one with Him always, even in the moving state, on the physical plane, when you are engaged in the activities of life. You are ever in tune with Him and never separate from Him. The term Sahaja Samadhi suggests that even in the normal condition you are one with Him. You need no special practices in order to maintain this natural state in which you remain in all conditions, without any effort or struggle. This is a state which is very rarely achieved, but there are Saints who have achieved it and live in it. They have no meditation hours, no periods for self-discipline, worship or prayers. They are ever in a state of prayer and oneness with God. They never miss God for a single moment. His presence is felt always at every turn, in every act and in every aspect of their life. This is the highest state of Samadhi. In the Sahaja Samadhi there is no going in or coming out. There is no rise or fall for you. You are in a state of constant bliss, poise, inner equilibrium. You are self-contained and self-contented. The joy you experience is unparalleled. You are completely satisfied. There is no more aspiration left for you,—material or spiritual.

In the beginning, man craves for so many things of the world But that craving leaves when it is substituted by the craving for God And on realising God, he becomes perfectly desireless So long as a man is agitated by one desire or another, there will be no peace for him When he has found satisfaction in the vision and experience of God and gets inebriated, drinking the divine nectar day and night, where is desire left in him? This is the utterly desireless state of Nirvana that Buddha realised and preached, wherein one is totally freed from the thraldom of worldly cares and worries

A COMMON MISTAKE

Very often the mistake is made of taking a particular stage to be the goal If a person sees God's divine form before him, he thinks he has attained God But these forms appear and disappear When they appear, we become happy and when they disappear, we become miserable, we then crave to see that form again But our aim is not to have a momentary joy, followed by states of agony and despair through separation We must get into a state in which we are one with God at all times and never miss Him. This experience is not gained even in Nirvikalpa Samadhi There you find oneness with God, but the moment you come out of it, you again fall into the old state of being affected by love and hate ,with the consequent disturbances and turmoils of the mind. Therefore, Nirvikalpa Samadhi, which some people consider as the goal, is not really the ultimate goal, because that state also is subject to change Sahaja state alone is the changeless state It is above all Dwandwas It is the state in which you derive complete satisfaction in all conditions of life, unaffected by the pairs of opposites For, you now live, move and act always in God, ever in tune with Him, ever absorbed in Him This highest experience is denied to the Mayavadins who believe in the theory of illusion and look upon the world not as a manifestation of God, but as false, as illusory For them, the problem remains more or less unsolved

HOW TO ATTAIN THE SAHAJA STATE?

Q Can Sahaja Samadhi be obtained through the help of a Saint, or can it be reached by means of the very strong desire one may have for it, after reaching Nirvikalpa?

Ramdas In the first place, we must believe that there is such a thing as the Sahaja Then we must receive instructions from

a Sage about that supreme state, and when we pray to God, He will surely grant us this Samadhi There are Jnanis who, as already pointed out, look upon the universe as Mithya or illusory. For them there is no question of attaining the Sahaja state Totapuri had not attained that highest Samadhi, but his disciple, Sri Ramakrishna, became his Guru there Totapuri was a Mayavadin who looked upon the world as an illusion Although he was instrumental in Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, it was given to Ramakrishna to teach him about the Sahaja state This crowning experience in spiritual practice the Guru lacked, and that want was supplied by the disciple Therefore they were mutually Gurus to each other

Very often, we are told by Jnanis that the world is an illusion That is true for the time being, so far as the Nirvikalpa state is concerned But in Sahaja Samadhi when you see the whole world as the play or manifestation of God, you transcend the illusion and find nothing to reject as false You realise that everything is His Lila and enjoy unbroken bliss in witnessing the play For that, of course, Guru's grace, power and guidance are necessary

Q Is there any difference between Buddha-consciousness and Christ-consciousness?

Ramdas Ramdas for one does not see any difference between the two, except in the names Buddha and Christ are great personages who came to teach mankind how to reach that supreme consciousness which was the same in the experience of both

NO REALISATION WITHOUT A GURU

Q Are there not cases of realisation of God without the help of a Guru, as in the case of Ramana Maharshi?

Ramadas It is said that Ramana too must have had a Guru in his previous life But that argument Ramdas does not want to advance here Before Ramana renounced his home, he must have come in contact with a great Saint who happened to go to the place where he lived A mere contact with the Saint must have ignited the spark within him for God-realisation and that must have led him onwards We meet in the course of our life so many great men and their influence certainly reaches us though we are unconscious of it One day, suddenly, we are awakened and made to walk on the Godward path and that process brings

us in touch with God within us and makes us realise Him We cannot understand who influenced us In such cases, we cannot say if we had any Guru at all It happens very often like that

GANDHIJI'S INFLUENCE ON RAMDAS

In the course of Ramdas' life, prior to his meeting the Guru, he had been awakened off and on by contacts with some dynamic personalities, though he had not felt that any power from 'outside had done it The awakening had taken place within him Ramdas once saw Gandhiji in Mangalore from a distance A strange influence from him changed Ramdas' outlook and his mind started going towards God The first touch was from Gandhiji

In some cases, no sadhanas or spiritual practices are required after the Saint's touch, for, they are ripe souls, ready to be illumined In some other cases, the ripening takes a long time When the soul is ripe, a mere sight or touch of a Saint is enough to break the barrier between that individual and God The influence of a great soul is absolutely necessary in the case of everybody, whether it is received consciously or unconsciously, whether it is sought after or not

THE CASE OF RAMANA MAHARSHI[1]

Those who believe in the theory of reincarnation say that Ramana Maharshi must have had a Guru in the past life, that he came as ripe soul to teach mankind, and was himself a Guru although he did not say he was one Thousands accepted him as a spiritual guide, read his books and did Sadhana according to his advice They went to him, sat in his presence and got immense solace All their problems were solved at the very sight of him All doubts and questions disappeared from their minds when they sat before him, completely lost in the inner peace and silence

GURUS AND UPA-GURUS

Q Is this the same thing as what Ramakrishna refers to,—that each man in his life meets a number of Upa-Gurus?

Ramdas Whenever we meet a Saint he influences our life to some extent If we meet another, he pushes us still farther until we get the Guru who takes us right to the goal Every contact with a Saint is helpful to us So, whenever we get an opportunity to meet a Saint, we should not miss it

Q What help can a Guru, who has left his body and had never seen his disciple, give to that disciple?

Ramdas Did the disciple, then, accept him as a Guru without seeing him? In that case, let him go and meet some Saint and look upon him as a form of that Guru—not as a separate person, but as the same one who was invisible before, but has now become visible before him in the form of this Saint—and receive blessings, grace and inspiration from him All Gurus are one Only, the forms are different Therefore it is said that the Guru never dies

RELIGION IS NOT A SHOW

Q Can dogmas, rituals, ceremonies and doctrines be considered as the opposites of true spirituality?

Ramdas If they are helpful, let them be observed If they are not, let them be given up Everything enjoined upon us by the Scriptures may be done provided they lead us towards God make our life pure, so that God's light may reflect in us, or be revealed in us Let our struggle not take the colour or shape of a mere show We must be tremendously earnest at heart All posing must be given up We must be sincere to the very core Religion is a matter between you and God It is not a show You must hold communion with Him, love Him, talk to Him feel one with Him in all manner of ways Live your life in His light with the experience of oneness with Him Get inspired by Him to do things Act as an instrument in His hands and feel that He is guiding, watching and making you do everything Then you are safe, you are on the right path You can deceive a man, but cannot deceive God, as He is the eternal witness within us and knows everything So be frank with Him and make the heart as pure, innocent and guileless as that of a child If we do so, He acknowledges us He takes us within His resplendent being and makes us realise our oneness with Him We should not feel one thing, say another and do something else There should be perfect co-ordination between thought, word and deed

NEED FOR SOLITUDE

Q Most teachers say that we should remain in the world and strive for God-realisation, but in almost all cases the teachers themselves withdrew from the world for realisation

Ramdas For some it is necessary that they should retire from the world for a long period and live in solitude for realising God For some others a short period of seclusion now and again

is of great help They do not feel the need of cutting themselves away from the world for a long time

The object of retiring from the world is to uproot from the mind hate, wrath and all the desires Those who do so feel they are not able to remove these, remaining active in the world, where they come daily in contact with persons whose life is not such as to encourage them on the spiritual path It is necessary to avoid such worldly surroundings, go into solitude and get established in divine consciousness Then one may return to the world, love those whom one was hating, move on friendly terms with those who were once disliked, and maintain peace and joy in all activities

It is not absolutely necessary that one should go away entirely from the world There were Saints who lived a family life, and who still were able to be detached from the world and remember God constantly Ramdas remembers a beautiful line of Emerson, "The great man is he who enjoys the sweetness of solitude in the midst of the crowd" You must be in the crowd and still feel all alone

Of course, this achievement is not easy Retirement to solitude now and again is advisable for all who are living in the world and are engaged in some work or other On holidays, or in the evenings, it is better to go to a quiet place in a garden, or elsewhere, where you are not disturbed by noise Here you can absorb yourself in meditation and attain inner calmness and peace Then come back to the work-a-day world and do your allotted work without any inner liking or disliking towards things about you You will have a calm and unruffled mind, with your hands and feet active in the service of others

Some rare souls remained in the world and attained God without resorting to solitude There were Saints in India who led a family life There were also those who had entirely left all worldly activities and gone into a forest for one or two years and returned with a new vision and experience This retirement was not utter renunciation, but a temporary retreat They came back to the world and became a blessing to mankind It is just like a man going abroad for advanced studies By this he does not renounce his family or the world After his studies, he comes back home, and is entrusted with more responsible work which he was not able to do before So also, when you retire from the

world, you get spiritual strength, your vision becomes wider, you come back with a new experience Now your heart has become pure, you love everybody alike, and you will work for the good of humanity as a whole, spreading peace and joy

THE EXAMPLE OF SAINTS

There are so many selfless souls of that nature Some of you may be knowing Sri Gurdial Mallik He is a lovely soul. Ramdas has met him He was in Shantiniketan and was a great admirer of Tagore He is an old man now, and so sweet-natured that wherever there is distress, he runs there to render help He is leading a simple life, is completely ego-less, humble and cheerful at the same time His heart aches at the suffering of others That is so with all Saints Their heart flows out to everybody in sympathy and love We should follow their example Our sympathy and love should go towards everybody alike When our relations fall ill, we feel sorry for them But if a stranger falls ill, we do not feel for him We must have the same feelings for the stranger as we have for our relations That means our love must be equally flowing towards everybody This cannot be unless we cultivate universal love in us by attaining equal vision It is only by purifying our heart through and through that we can get such a vision

ERADICATE THE INNER ENEMIES

Q When we are trying to meditate, it is difficult to concentrate Do outside factors come into play and prevent meditation?

Ramdas If adverse forces are disturbing us from outside, we shall never be able to get the necessary concentration But our disturbances are inside Our desires are within us They are our foes So we must conquer them When we are free from the desires belonging to our lower nature, we can remain perfectly impregnable and unaffected by any adverse influence that might be coming from outside If we are able to conquer the mind, we can remain unshaken whatever the external conditions, circumstances or environments may be Primarily, the desires lurking within us are responsible for the restlessness of mind and this, in turn, is responsible for our not attaining the concentration aimed at

EXTERNAL AIDS ARE SECONDARY

Then the question arises, 'Are we not to provide ourselves with a suitable atmosphere for attaining concentration?' It is

agreed on all hands that we should have proper company, a proper place and a proper environment conducive to concentration. We should have a quiet, undisturbed atmosphere. This we can get even in our own homes. We can do proper meditation during the early hours of the morning. About 4 a.m. is what in Sanskrit is called 'Brahma Muhurta', which means the period when you can easily tune yourself with Brahman, the Absolute. This period is most suitable for meditation. Then nature outside also is quiet and we can easily concentrate our mind. But so long as we have not quelled the inner desires which are mainly responsible for mental disturbances, even this period will not help us much. So, although external help is necessary, what is wanted primarily is the eradication of all the inner desires and the direction of the mind towards God. Then alone our mind gets absorbed in the Divine and we rise from the lower human nature to a higher divine nature.

DEVELOP DAIVI SAMPATH

There are two kinds of Prakriti or nature in us. The lower is called Apara Prakriti and the higher Para Prakriti. When the higher nature rules in us, we are happy, cheerful, kind, loving, patient and forgiving. When the lower is uppermost, we are quite the reverse,—unhappy, worried, harsh, impatient, angry and cruel. These two natures are playing in us, alternately. What we have to do is to subjugate the lower nature completely, by surrendering ourselves to God through constant remembrance of Him, and dwell in the higher nature, which is the divine nature. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of Daivi Sampath and Asuri Sampath. Asuri Sampath belongs to the lower nature. They are the violent forces working in us. Daivi Sampath belongs to the higher nature whose forces are light, peace and strength. These divine powers must be developed by conquering the lower nature. Daivi qualities help us to think of God and God alone all the time.

So it is clear that the enemy is within us and not outside. This enemy is the ego. When the ego is killed, our lower nature disappears and the higher nature manifests in us. It is said in the Gita that we are our own enemies and our own friends. There is no friend or enemy outside. Our enemy is the ego within. Our friend is God who is also within us. If we make friendship with God and give up friendship with the ego, we are saved. Then

we shall be able to live a life of light, joy, power and wisdom

LOVE GOD, DO NOT FEAR HIM

Q How is it possible to attain real, permanent and effective love of God? Often, a man fears God and because of that fear he abstains from wrong deeds and tries to perform good deeds, especially those prescribed by his religion At the same time, he knows that God is the only Reality and that He is to be loved So the aspirant goes to a Master and asks him to guide him In spite of all this it happens that even after many years of struggle he has not yet attained real love for God and so he begins to despair He prays to God to get that love He is in a state of darkness so long as he does not attain it

Ramdas It may be either that the guidance the aspirant received was not right guidance, or he was not prepared to follow what the Master had told him, with the consequence he did not get what he wanted

One thing is very clear It is not correct to say that we have to *fear* God, we have to *love* Him It is by love alone you get from Him what you want Fear keeps you away from Him We must approach God just as a child approaches the mother, with full trust and love We must feel that by approaching Him we will be really benefited Mother is all love, kindness and forgiveness Whatever mistakes we may do, she forgives If in that attitude we approach God, He will guide us all right He does not create fear in us He creates in us love for Him, a deep longing for Him Through love alone we can approach God and draw inspiration from Him by offering our heart entirely to Him It is through love that we receive the mother's protection So God is to be looked upon most lovingly, as our Mother or Father We have to love God, to see that God's love is revealed in our heart In our heart is seated the all-powerful, all-loving Father and Mother If we only come to know that He is existing within us, we are saved

LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

The best means by which we can show our love for Him is constant remembrance of Him What we love, we remember If we do not remember Him constantly, it means that we do not have love for Him Our love is best revealed by constant remembrance of Him, talking about Him and doing everything in

His name If we keep away from Him, our hearts will not flower into acts of love, words of love and thoughts of love If we trust in him, He transforms us as He wills, not as we will, and gives us what He thinks is best for us He elevates, illumines and fills us with divine love through and through

Constant remembrance of His name will create that love in our heart, because He and His name are not different When His name is in our heart, He is in our heart He is all love, and so we too shall have love in our heart Unless we get that love we shall never have peace On the contrary, devoid of love we shall be restless and be subject to all kinds of passions which will keep us ever miserable and unhappy

When Ramdas had the longing for God, he got a liking for the Name Then the Master came and gave him the Name, assuring him, 'Chant this Name always and you will get eternal peace' With that assurance Ramdas went on chanting the Name constantly, day and night, as he was told to do His whole body was thrilling with joy and peace, he could behold everybody as the expression of God, and he would move with them in a state of perfect unity and oneness That state is still with him because God's grace has descended on him and has transformed him into what he is So, for Ramdas seeing you all is seeing his most beloved God He does not see you different from that Beloved within

LOVE—A DIVINE FORCE

Love! What is love, after all? Love is the divine force that inspires us to move and act in the world, in the midst of people, feeling one with them That inner feeling of oneness with others is essential for expressing love on the external plane Ramdas can define love in this way—'Love is the expression of our inner oneness with another'

Rev Andrews, about whom you must have heard, was once in India He was a staunch Christian and followed the precepts of Christ But there was one thing which was puzzling him It was Christ's teaching 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' He could not understand it very well It was a difficult problem So he went to Rabindranath Tagore, of whom also you must have heard, and whom Rev Andrews later looked upon as his Gurudev, and put this question to him Tagore took the book of

Upanishads and read a passage explaining its meaning to Andrews The passage was a follows —

न वा अरे पत्यु कामाय पति प्रियो भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय पति प्रियो भवति । न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति । न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्रा प्रिया भवन्ति आत्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्रा प्रिया भवन्ति । न वा अरे वित्तस्य कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय त्रित्तं प्रियं भवति । न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय मर्व प्रियं भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ।।

—*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*—11-4-5

The passage is from a dialogue between Sage Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi wherein the Sage tells her —"It is not for the sake of the husband, my dear, that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved It is not for the sake of the wife, my dear, that she is loved, but for one's own sake that she is loved It is not for the sake of the sons, my dear, that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved It is not for the sake of wealth, my dear, that it is loved, but for one's own sake that it is loved It is not for the sake of all, my dear, that all is loved, but for one's own sake that all is loved"

Here the great Sage explains how I can love my neighbour as myself when I know that I and he are one In the light of the Atman we are all one and this Atman is the basis of our love for others We love all those whom we love because of the Self or Atman in them which is the same Atman in ourselves Love everywhere is based on the Atman In the recognition of that inner kinship of the Spirit we move with each other and freely love each other, and in this we find true peace and joy On hearing this explanation, Rev Andrews understood the teaching of Christ better

Love is thus the outward expression of our inner relationship with another through the Spirit The Spirit in me and the Spirit in you are one This is Vedanta This is what the Upanishads teach us

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

Q Is material activity, to which we in the West are devoted, an obstacle to concentration? When we ought to turn to God we are absorbed in material activity For turning to God therefore, should we reserve a special time and hour of the day when

we are not absorbed in other activities?

Ramdas: We must have both work and devotion for God While doing the work in which we are usually engaged, we must also reserve some time for contemplation of the Divine within us, until at last we are able to make the spiritual realisation a background for our external activity Action should not be renounced The aim is to perform all actions selflessly with the knowledge that we are the supreme, all-pervading, changeless Spirit Then it is that the activity becomes beneficial to all mankind

A scientist can thus remain a scientist and discover things which will bring happiness and peace to the world, with the knowledge that he is not merely a body but the immortal Spirit Such activity will give him greater joy and peace than if he does his work in a selfish spirit For action done with a higher consciousness of the Divine will be purer and holier as it is done from the standpoint of the Spirit and not of the ego The Lord's power and peace will then ever flow through such a person and his work will stand the test of time and he will be a great benefactor of humanity. There are scientists who have been able to invent or discover many things for the good of humanity They must have worked, no doubt, from the ordinary standpoint But when they become Yogis, when they are united with God and use all the capacities that God has given them for the service of humanity, they will stand out as even greater benefactors of the world, greater than what they were when they did not realise the spiritual truth within themselves

WORK WITH GOD ON THE BACKGROUND

Q What about those people who are engaged in business and more particularly those whose job is to sell goods?

Ramdas They must be honest in all their dealings Ramdas was going to say that this is perfectly true of all professions, all kinds of work we do in the world If we make God the background of our life, we can live in the right manner, enjoy happiness and peace and be a source of joy to others in all that we do Also we shall never have recourse to any foul means for earning our bread or accumulating things for ourselves We shall then work for the good of others and observe absolute honesty, truthfulness and righteousness We shall never go astray, because God who is within us, and whom we have known and realised, will never let us go on the wrong path Our life

and work will be fruitful Our actions will bear the stamp of unselfishness and therefore prove beneficial to everybody,—whether we work as businessmen, doctors, lawyers, scientists poets or literary men In whatever field we work we shall be contributing towards the happiness of mankind We shall share our happiness with others and also make them share their happiness with still others

In the ancient days, it is said, business was done in this manner In India, especially, this was common A carpenter would perpare furniture and give it in exchange for a few measures of rice from agriculturist He would not sell it for money The doctor used to treat the sick and get, in exchange, grains from the agriculturist, or cloth from the weaver, and so on The agriculturist too would give his grains to the manufacturer of cloth and take from him cloth in return This was called the barter system, in which there was no dishonesty of any kind They were trying to meet the needs of all people in this manner and there was perfect harmony, mutual co-operation and a give-and-take policy Now the business is carried on in a different way, based on money economy by which people try to exploit each other and make the best of what they have, especially when there is a great demand for their things Business morality is very low now This is so everywhere in the world

WHERE THERE IS A WILL

Q Are there certain professions in which conditions are more favourable to spiritual life than others? By tilling the soil one can live an honest life Is that not better than working in a noisy factory where the mind is too much distracted?

Ramdas Ramdas was working in a factory at one time Even in the midst of the noise he was able to keep the mind well under control It is not the external conditions that are responsible for mental poise If we are determined upon walking on the path of truth and righteousness and knowing God, then, during the leisure hours we can devote ourselves to God and God alone Where there is a will there is a way This is perfectly true whether one works in a factory, on the fields, or anywhere else If one is sincere one will be able to attain Him, and no extraordinary difficulty will stand in the way of spiritual achievement

Among the great saints of India you find there were so many engaged in manual labour There were weavers [illegible]rs, pot-

ters, farmers There were priests also They were drawn from various communities and professions Even when they were active in their professions they were able to realise God Kabir was a weaver His mind was one with God and he was absorbed in God-consciousness. Still he was able to do his work, and that work was found to be the most perfect. When he was working, he was completely unconscious of the body and the work If we are earnest in realising God, in whatever profession we are engaged, we can realise and know Him God Himself provides the necessary conditions and facilities and leads us to the supreme goal

LAW OF TRANSMIGRATION AND KARMA

Q In the West we find it more difficult than in Asia to accept the idea of a succession of lives

Ramdas: From the absolute standpoint there is no succession of lives For the Atman is devoid of birth and death Only from the relative standpoint we have to accept the theory of transmigration or reincarnation of souls Evolution has been taking place in us for a long time This body is not the only body we have assumed for our spiritual evolution and ultimate release from the thraldom of birth and death, of desire and action So we are, life after life, progressing towards the supreme goal of liberation We have to take it that we had past lives and except for a rare few, we shall have future lives also

This acceptance of the theory of reincarnation is very helpful to us in our spiritual evolution It helps us in three ways First, when we suffer now, apparently without any cause, we are prone to blame others for it and then try, in a spirit of retaliation, to harm the other party through whose instrumentality we imagine this suffering or difficulty has come to us And we only make our condition worse by so doing Secondly, if we find that suffering has come to us on account of another, we shall have no patience to bear it, whereas if we know that we are suffering on account of our own actions in the past, we shall bear it patiently Thirdly, in the light of our own experience, we can realise that we suffer as a result of our past actions, turn over a new leaf and become better men and women and avoid doing bad actions for which we shall have to suffer in the future

So, in all the three ways the acceptance of the law of Karma and reincarnation helps us in our spiritual evolution Further, it

is not merely a theory, it is a fact that cannot be denied Otherwise, God will be unjust in giving us only one life and sending us to hell or heaven according to our actions in that life, giving us no more chance to improve That would be incompatible with the nature of an all-loving Father and Mother by whose Grace alone we are liberated from sin and granted supreme beatitude After successive births and re-births we get thoroughly purified and finally God takes us unto Himself

"I AM YOUR CHILD, O GOD"

Q After a long and tiresome day, when we want to concentrate on the Name of God, we are overpowered by sleep We think we are concentrating, but it is only sleep, and we awake some hours afterwards Perhaps you can give us some advice in order to prevent such situations

Ramdas A man sits up for two hours for meditation, but does not tune himself with God There is another who sits for only a minute or two and gets in tune with God Who is the better of the two? If you put your heart and soul into the remembrance of God and sit only for one minute, that is more fruitful than struggling to remember God for four hours So, if you have full trust in God, repeat His Name but once with love and faith and go to sleep with the feeling 'O God, I am Your child' If you retire with this feeling you will be nearer God than those who try without this feeling to remember Him for hours and struggle to become one with Him or tune their mind with Him When you are tired after a whole day's work, pray to Him 'O God, You have enabled me to work for the whole day I am tired now Make me love You more and make me love all and make me pure' With such a simple prayer, go to sleep Then you are safe

GIVE JOY TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Q There is a problem which we are constantly confronted with in our life We realise that whatever we do may go to make some people happy and some others unhappy How can this be reconciled with an attitude of love for all?

Ramdas In such a case reason is our guide Before intuition, the voice of the Divine within us, becomes our guide, reason must guide us Reason discusses the pros and cons of a question It is true that by pursuing some action we give pain to some and joy

to others, but we should first see that the action itself must be perfectly selfless. When a selfless action is done, the results belong to God The action itself becomes the fruit and it must give joy to the largest possible number of people In such a case it is not that we give joy to others, but we find joy for ourselves in helping others We are doing good actions not so much for the benefit of others as for our own peace, joy and elevation Supposing we help a beggar who is starving, we do so not so much for relieving his hunger as for relieving the feeling in our own heart.

So, the primary consideration is that it must be selfless action, which gives peace to us, and the result is in God's hands You cannot make everybody happy, nor please everybody in the world Ours is to make our life and our actions selfless and do everything in a spirit of love for all concerned When you do this, even the misery that others may get as a result of your actions may be for their own ultimate good It will not be in any way detrimental to them You give yourself away, because that is your nature, and by that you find peace and joy within yourself On that account many are happy, but if anybody feels unhappy he has only made himself so, and by that he will learn how to improve himself In a sloka in the Bhagavad Gita it is said. 'You have the right only to work but not to the results thereof'

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY

Q May a man abandon his family, even if he is its support, when he hears the call of God?

Ramdas Many did so in the firm belief that God would look after their family, and God did look after it But it is not always necessary that a person should leave the family permanently He may be away for some time after which he may rejoin the family, but with a different vision and outlook on life and with a greater and higher experience The same thing happened with Ramdas after he left everything and went away at the call of the Divine People asked him how he made up his mind to so act He replied that the call was irresistible and therefore he had to go out of the family What became of him afterwards? Instead of a small family, the world at large became his family and all men and women became his brothers and sisters, among whom his erstwhile relations were also included

Ramdas has found that the responsibility of protecting the family is really God's and not ours. You will find several instances in which famines due to scarcity of rain and other reasons have devastated many places, leaving the father, mother and children all starving Can the father say in such a crisis he is able to look after his wife and children? When you know that God is an all-pervading, eternal Reality and that by His will the worlds are moving, and they are all under His protection, then the sense of your individual responsibility ceases It is then you know that God is looking after your family and never gives them up Even when you were in their midst claiming to protect them, it was He who really protected them, then you were only an agent of God He had not given them up If you leave them He will find another agent But your faith in Him must be implicit You must remain in the family and feel that He is protecting the family and you are only His agent through whom that protection is being given When you know this, your feeling of responsibility ceases and you realise that God alone is protecting every one of us

As Ramdas told you, the same question had occurred to him Even when he was living with the family, he was not taking care of them, but the Divine was doing so He did not know that at that time Once his relations came to him He had a daughter who had reached marriageable age In India, to give a girl in marriage is a great responsibility It is an important function which the parents should do and the girl, according to the practice in those days, must be married before the age of puberty There was no money in the house, nor was there any bank balance Ramdas had become a mendicant, wandering from place to place, mad after God The relatives asked Ramdas, 'What about your daughter's marriage?' Ramdas replied, 'God will look after everything' And wonderfully enough, God brought about things in such a way that the girl was duly married So also, if you entrust yourself to Him and work in the family as His agent, your remaining in the family or not will not matter You can be ever happy and cheerful

SECRET OF DIVINISING WORK

But, then, why did not Ramdas remain in the family? He does not know Perhaps, it so happened that he might tell every-

body that one might remain in the family and need not go away Soon after travelling all over India, Ramdas came back to the place where he had left his family As soon as he returned, the members of the family, who now form a part of his big world family, crowded round him. Ramdas lived in their midst and asked them to depend upon God for everything To feel that we are doing everything by our will and power is wrong It is by His will that we are doing everything If we are conscious of this, then we are free, otherwise we are bound and hence unhappy

So, remember God constantly and feel that you do not exist by yourself Be fully aware of this truth and live in the world and do whatever work is entrusted to you as a matter of duty in a spirit of dedication to Him Take it that this machine of your body is worked by the Divine power It is not working by itself, or by your individual ego If you are always alive to this, you will never do any wrong in the world This does not mean that you should remain idle Whatever work you have to do should be done, but in the proper spirit. It is not renunciation of action that is needed, but the transformation of it into divine action Action by itself is not a sin But the consciousness 'I am the doer' is the cause of sin Let the 'I' go and fill yourself with God Then your actions become pure and glorious

LIVE IN ETERNITY

Q It has been prophesied that Buddha will be born again after 2500 years, i e, in our life-time, will it be fulfilled?

Ramdas. Ramdas is not able to deal with prophecies What will happen in future is not his concern We are to think about what we can do at present so that we may go beyond time and space and realise the immortal Truth The purpose of Ramdas in giving talks to you here is to take you beyond time and space and make you remember that infinite and eternal Reality So, desist from dwelling in time and space as far as possible, because eternity is what we are concerned with here Eternity means that which is beyond time and space There is no past, present or future in Eternity or Reality

NATURE'S WAY AND OUR WAY

Q How can we believe in the love of God when we look at Nature and see that the stronger eats up the weaker?

Ramdas That is Nature's way What should be *our* way?—is the question for us We must follow the path of love and affection towards everybody When we love all alike and realise the Truth, we will transcend the notions of the so-called good and evil in the world The world is controlled by three forces They are the forces of creation, preservation and destruction This is evident to us at every step of our life You see everywhere things are being created, they remain for some time and ultimately go into dissolution This is the case in relation to everything that we see in the world

Every form that we see is subject to these three states of birth, growth and death We must go beyond these states, into the realm of the Spirit in which there is neither birth, nor growth, nor death That Spirit we call God If we think of God constantly and realise our identity or oneness with Him, we make our life blessed by developing the vision of equality and our love for everybody will be of the same nature We are not to see what the world is and what the world is not We are only to see what we are and what we should be We cannot change the world because the forces of nature are powerful and will go on doing their work Our movements should be in consonance with the forces of nature We must remain unaffected by nature through attunement with God

NATURE HELPS EVOLUTION

Perhaps, the answer which Ramdas gave may not be satisfying to some He will try to make it clearer Movements in nature tend always towards progressive evolution—whether it be birth, growth or destruction These relate to the objects that we see around us, which have name and form Any change that takes place in nature,—birth, growth or destruction,—will tend to free the soul which is now caught in the coils of nature The soul has identified itself with the nature, i e, with the body, and has therefore fallen from the divine state If one should regain the lost divinity he must gradually evolve towards it Destruction of the body from time to time is absolutely necessary for the soul's evolution So, death is not a thing to be disliked, or to be feared It is neither horrible, nor avoidable Death is only of the body, not of the Spirit When we pass from this life through death to another life, it is as if we are passing from one

room to another. It is a transcendence from one state to another state It is a necessary stage of evolution,—the gateway to a higher realm

THE DIVINE CYCLE

Sages take death as a matter of course Nature is always trying to adjust itself and, in that adjustment, destruction also plays an important part You will find war, famine, floods and so many cataclysms and calamities overtaking humanity, bringing about destruction on a vast scale They are necessary in God's plan for the evolution of creatures to a higher state When we think of the colossal destruction of human beings, we are aghast But we do not care to recognise that millions and millions of insects are being destroyed every moment We have to take a total view of the problem and then we find that the natural forces are working in a mysterious way to bring about an evolution in the world so that the creatures caught in the lower nature may be freed from it until they reach the pinnacle of spiritual evolution and attain the original divine state from which they have come forth From where we started, there we reach again, after passing through so many stages This is the divine cycle We have to understand this cycle and move along the cycle consciously

In conclusion, let us pursue the simple way by which we can make ourselves happy and make others happy, and that is to realise the all-pervading God who is dwelling in our heart

PROMISE AND FULFILMENT

Q We make a promise and later find that we ought not to have made it Then should we consider ourselves bound by that promise, or should we ask God to indicate what we should do?

Ramdas That depends upon the promise we have made If it is a promise to relieve the distress of a party, we must fulfil it at any cost But if we find that we are going to do more harm than good, it is better we do not carry out that promise We should pray to God to guide us aright in future so that we may make the right promises, to the right persons and at the right time

THE DANGERS OF PRANAYAM

Q: Can you tell us something about the dangers of Pranayama?

Ramdas Pranayama consists in inhaling, retaining and exhaling breath It is essentially a practice of breath control so that we can have harmonious breathing Breathing has an important bearing upon the state of our mind When the breathing is harmonised and regularised, our mind becomes calm. That is why breathing exercise is resorted to

The danger is that sometimes we are prone to overdo it. When we start the practice of Pranayama our mind becomes calm and serene, but after some time, and especially when we do not do Pranayama, the mind becomes restless So we are tempted to continue the practice for longer and longer periods, with the result that the mind or brain may be over-taxed

The danger lies especially in the retention of breath When you breathe in for a certain period, retain the breath for the same period and breathe out in the same period, you will have the real benefit of Pranayama But some people are tempted to hold the breath for longer periods, thinking that by so doing they will permanently have a state of motionless mind The retention of breath for a longer time tells upon the brain Ramdas knows that some people who had taken to the practice have gone utterly mad Though some of them have recovered, some others have remained lunatics all their life

The danger is in the confusion that is produced in the mind by Pranayama practised with the help of books or of initiation from those who themselves know very little about it You must get training from a man who is well accomplished in the science. Pranayama forms one of the limbs of Raja-Yoga If you learn this from a teacher by whom you can be guided on the right path, you will be safe because, even if there is anything wrong, the teacher will be able to set it right

In the Yoga Sutras written by Patanjali, eight dangers have been pointed out The Yogi warns people that they should practise the Yoga in a proper and systematic way and not merely with the help of books Heart palpitation, lung diseases, mental derangement, consumption and such diseases await the person who practises Pranayama on the lines not in accordance with what is prescribed for him by an accomplished Guru. Ramdas has come into contact with a dozen or more young men who had taken to this practice and given up their homes and their work

and were wandering about, with perfectly blank minds, without knowing what they were doing Sometimes when the mind is deranged, the person becomes violent and has to be locked up in a room Doctors cannot do anything to get them back to normal condition So it has been said that Pranayama is dangerous

PRANAYAMA CANNOT BY ITSELF LEAD TO GOD

Mere practice of Pranayama will not enable you to realise God. It can keep your mind still for some time, but the desires lurking within can never be destroyed by Pranayama You can attain some amount of concentration, but this is not an end in itself The veil of ignorance that has clouded the soul has to be destroyed The grace of the Guru is necessary for that, as also continuous meditation on the Reality within you

Ramdas himself had tried Pranayama for six months He found that its effect on the mind was a deadening blow by which the mind became perfectly blank and still It was an experience of dryness, complete blankness This is not an advisable state as in that state you have to abandon all work and sit silent like one who has nothing to do In fact, you will be unable to do any work

When Ramdas was doing Pranayama he could not do even Japa Japa stopped and the mind became blank Before that, he was reading out from the scriptures to friends who came to him After Ramdas started the practice of Pranayama, he could not read at all The friends who were regularly coming to hear him were wondering what the matter was with him He could not even give them a reply He was sitting like a statue, the book lying by his side He found later that Pranayama could not by itself lead to the realisation of God He therefore stopped the practice and again took up repetition of Ramnam

JAPA YOGA IS THE EASIEST

Now, the fountain of joy that had been dried up for the time being by Pranayama again opened up and Ramdas was filled with a strange ecstasy. Thereafter he never attempted to practise Pranayama He started telling people that the easiest way to still the mind was Japa In the Bhagavad Gita there is some advice given about Pranayama. But you will find in it also one sloka

which says that 'Of all the Yajnas, I am the Japa Yajna' Japa-Yoga is the easiest and safest path

Pranayama is, after all, one of the eight limbs of Yoga If you do not strictly observe Brahmacharya throughout the practice, that itself will cause derangement of the brain You must eat only such food as will enable you to concentrate the mind You cannot eat all kinds of food You must always tell the truth and never an untruth You must have a proper *Asana* or seat, your attention must be drawn inward, between the eye-brows; you must go into solitude where there are no noises and there you must practise Pranayama These rules must be rigorously observed

Very often, family men try to practise Pranayama and do not observe absolute celibacy, with the result the mind refuses to be controlled by Pranayama They exert force to control it and it breaks, gets confused Then they begin to behave in an awkward, unseemly way. This is not what we have to attain We must have harmony outside and inside us We are not to deaden the nerves and make the mind blank, nor make life erratic Swami Vivekananda has in his book on Raja Yoga given a grave warning to aspirants that they should strictly obey all the rules regarding Pranayama and, even so, practise it only under the personal instructions of a competent Guru

'RED-HOT' LONGING FOR GOD

Q Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has said that in this age of Kali Yuga, three days' undivided devotion to God is enough for Darshan of God

Ramdas It is perfectly true You must lay stress upon the term 'undivided devotion' It may be possible to have the vision even in a shorter period All depends upon the intensity of our aspiration to have Him What is needed is aspiration, tremendous earnestness, tremendous intensity Then it may be that in the twinkling of an eye we can get Him

It is to get that intensity that we struggle Our mind is distracted by so many attractions of the world It is so restless for sense pleasures that we find it difficult to get that intensity of longing for Him. We must yearn for God like a fish out of water Fish naturally longs for water with very great intensity If we have the same intensity for God, we can have Him within a very short time. The time factor does not count Our desire

for Him must be 'red-hot', as they say, and not lukewarm, as it is with so many who are struggling They are not at fault Mind is a terrible thing to control. But if the heart is filled with God-desire, mind also will follow it. That is, if our love for God is very great, the mind also will think of Him without wandering here and there, and like the bee that sits on a flower and drinks honey, forget itself So our mind must be absorbed in God and enjoy the bliss of union with Him Then it will refuse to go anywhere else

A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION

But the mind has not tasted that joy That is why it is running here and there in pursuit of objects of the senses outside, instead of settling down in that supreme Reality within us whose nature is pure bliss and peace Ramakrishna Paramahamsa gives a beautiful instance to illustrate the sort of aspiration necessary. A disciple asked his Guru to show him God The Guru took him to a river and asked him to dip himself in it The disciple did so As soon as his head went under water, the Guru caught hold of it and kept it pressed for some time under water. The disciple was gasping for breath and struggling to raise his head What was his anxiety then? Only to get some air, because he was getting suffocated Soon after that the Guru released the disciple He then lifted his head up 'How did you feel?' asked the Guru The disciple replied 'I felt I was dying for want of breath' The Guru smilingly said, "If you want to attain God, you must feel you are dying for want of God" Likewise, if we feel that without God we cannot live for another second, God will be ours Are we able to fulfil this condition? No, we have not got that intensity of longing We move on slowly Of course, slowly or rapidly, we are bound to reach the goal some day But let us go forward with as much zeal as we can command and ask Him for more and more of it until we find Him

A STORY

In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story Once, several years ago, Ramdas was sitting in a cave on the top of a hill from where he used to come down for bathing in a tank Near the tank there was a rest-house intended for wandering mendicants One day, after his bath, Ramdas went to the rest-house where he saw a party of seven or eight young men who had come from the town for a picnic The town was about four miles

from the rest-house These young men had brought with them a child, may be about a year or two old Perhaps they thought that it would be a great fun to have the child with them during the picnic Each one by turns played with the child and kept it quite happy and cheerful

After some time they found the child getting restless It was looking at every direction for something which it missed and started crying The young men made out that the child was thinking about its mother But she was far away in the town. So they tried to divert the child's attention by giving it some sweets, toys and so on It kept quiet for some time, but again it looked here and there and started crying 'Mother'! 'Mother'! The young men got frightened as it was not possible to take the child to its mother soon They brought some more toys and some more sweets, but all these interested the child only for a few seconds after which it started crying again for the mother Now the child grew most restless, fell to the ground, cried aloud, beating its hands and feet So one of them had to take the child at once on his shoulders and run to the town for handing it back to its mother

We must be like that child, without any serious attraction for the toys with which we play in the world and be satisfied only when we get the Mother The Guru will take you to the Mother's place, or the Mother will come to your place It is the Guru that brings us in contract with the Mother Here, the man who took the child to its mother is something like the Guru The mother felt happy and the child also was supremely happy when they were united So, if our hunger for God is as intense as that of the child, no time will be lost in getting Him We are sure to have His vision

RAMDAS' EXPERIENCE OF MEDITATION

Q What discipline should we follow in meditation?

Ramdas Ramdas can tell you his own experience regarding meditation. He had never practised meditation for the first year of his Sadhana He was simply repeating God's Name with all love and faith He thought his life's object would be fulfilled only by realising God, by seeing Him, by feeling Him, by having Him all for himself, so that his life may be purified, ennobled, illumined and in every way blessed He thought that was the highest purpose in life To that end he was day and night

remembering God, and pining for Him so that He might reveal Himself. It went on like this for one year when he was wandering in several parts of India, as narrated in his first book "In Quest of God".

After his return to Mangalore, he occupied a cave on a small hill. There also he was repeating God's name constantly. One evening, God wished that he should sit for meditation. But he did not know what meditation was. He was simply repeating the Ram-mantra and his mind was bathed in an ocean of peace. He was aware of the external life, but he had no interest in anything. In that state he was asked to sit silent with closed eyes and allow the mind to take its own course. He sat erect and closed his eyes. As soon as he closed the eyes, the mind became still, sank within and lost itself. He was in a state of trance and ecstasy. For nearly three hours he could not move his limbs. He was seized with joy from within, with which he became one. He could not come out. He also would not come out. Both were true. Because he was lost in joy, he could not come out. Because he was enjoying that rare bliss, he would not come out.

In that state he sat for those three hours, still like a rock, not entirely unaware of the external life. For a time there was a dim consciousness. When he was sitting erect like this, a peculiar feeling came over him in which he first lost awareness of the hands, and this sensation gradually extended all over the body, until at last he was completely oblivious of it. He was sitting, awake in a state of supreme joy and was feeling that he was all-pervading. He was lost in that consciousness. The chanting of the Name had done its task and he had been prepared for the final plunge. Now he was completely lost.

BE ABSORBED IN THE UNIVERSAL

Thereafter, whenever there was any devotional music going on, he used to go into trance for hours together. But later on, this developed into another consciousness wherein he beheld everywhere the Divine. As he became more and more aware of the Divine presence everywhere, going into trances became less frequent, until he was established in God-consciousness to such an extent that that state remained with him in all conditions,—whether awake or asleep, talking or walking.

So, meditation as such was not practised by Ramdas. It came to him automatically after long practice of chanting God's name.

Then he was induced into that state by such external impacts as God's Name sung before him, or some talk about God which fell into his ears. But, gradually, that was also controlled by God. Now he is living in the normal condition, in what is called Sahaja Avasta, but the divine consciousness which he experienced in trances is still maintained.

This is how meditation came to him. It was spontaneous. People generally complain that when they sit for meditaton their mind wanders and they have to strive hard to bring it to a point. But, for Ramdas that difficulty was never there. Constant repetition of Ram Nam had destroyed the wandering tendency of the mind and such a mind easily sank into the super-conscious state and he was lost. Meditation, as some people understand it, is that process by which they have to struggle hard to think about God, keep the mind concentrated upon His Name and bring to their mind the many attributes of God, and thus gradually control the mind, subdue the desires, and all that. There was no such thing with Ramdas. So, what can Ramdas tell you about the difficulties in the way of meditation? The individual self must be absorbed in the Universal and you must lose the body-consciousness, completely merging your individual being in that Supreme Being within you who may be called God, Truth or Reality.

"THE DEW DROP SLIPS INTO THE SEA"

Ramdas is reminded here of the words of Lord Buddha, which he read in the "Light of Asia"—the book in which the teachings of Lord Buddha are given. "The dew drop slips into the shining sea." What becomes of the drop? It becomes one with the shining sea! So, when our individual soul, through meditation, merges in the Universal Soul, what becomes of the individual soul? It comes by the same consummation as the dew drop achieves when it slips into the shining sea. The individual soul becomes the Universal Soul,—the all-pervading, eternal, infinite light. This is what becomes of us when, through meditation, we are immersed in that ocean of divine bliss and peace.

GENEVA,
30th August 1954.

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

Power of the Name

Some years ago, when this servant of God was in Amritsar, he met a Saint belonging to the Sikh religion He was a great lover of God's Name, as Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was a votary of the Divine Name He held the Divine Name to be the way to salvation According to the Sikh religion, only two things are essential for attaining salvation—contact of the Guru and chanting the glorious Name of God You must have the grace of the Saint, you must receive the Name from him, and the Name should be always on your tongue, in your mind

In the course of a talk with that Saint, Ramdas said to him that God is everywhere and the Saint himself was God. The Saint replied that he did not want to become God, but only wanted God's Name

It is said that God's Name is greater than God Devotees in India are never tired of singing the glories of God's Name They say the Name is everything Ramdas knows from experience that no other spiritual practice can so easily grant you purity,—absolute freedom from lust, greed and wrath,—and make your mind just like that of an innocent child. When you have the Name in your mind, there is light, purity, peace and joy It is an all-sufficient, all-comprehensive practice It is not that you get happiness some time after repeating the Name. The moment you repeat it with love for God, the moment you have it on your tongue, you enjoy its sweetness This wonderful potency the simple Name of God has, because the Name itself is God If you get the Name, you get God Himself When Ramdas said that Name itself was God, people used to wonder how that could be In reply Ramdas asked them to take the Name with all love and faith and see for themselves how sweet, glorious and powerful the Name of God is The Lord says to Sage Narada, according to a Hindu scripture:—

नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे न योगिहृदये रवौ ।
मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

"I do not reside in Vaikuntha (highest Heaven), nor in the Yogi's heart, nor in the Sun, O Narada. I dwell wherever My devotees sing about Me"

In Christianity, too, the Name is extolled In Sufism also, you know, the Name is held to be the best way to salvation Among all the sects and creeds in India you will find the Name is held to be the easiest means for realising God So it is admitted on all hands that the Name of God is the most potent force by which we can be purified, so that God's peace and love may fill our hearts

HOW NAME IS GREATER THAN GOD

Q You said some time ago that the Name of God is greater than God Can you tell us something more about it?

Ramdas You have heard of Sri Rama, the great Avatar, who came to the world many centuries ago During His life-time He liberated many souls who came in personal contact with Him But after He gave up His body, His name has been liberating millions and millions of devotees—age after age His name has been the mainstay for so many struggling souls The power of the Name will continue to give spiritual illumination for many more ages to come It is clear from this that His Name is greater than He The name 'Rama' is so powerful that as soon as you hear it, as soon as it comes to your mind, it purifies you, though Rama Himself is not present before you in person

Q Does that mean that the superiority of the name of God over God Himself is to be understood in its relation with mankind and not from the angle of absolute Truth?

Ramdas Name and God are not different because, from the effects, it is seen that His Name, even long after He has disappeared, has been the mainstay for thousands and thousands Through the constant repetition of that Name, they have attained liberation Name and God are one God is nameless and formless Still, He assumes some form for liberating mankind and we give Him some name But the ultimate realisation takes us beyond all name and form The purpose of the Name is to make us transcend all names, and the purpose of the Form is to help us transcend all forms The form of God that appeared on earth

from the Infinite Silence, the Infinite Spirit, liberated many people during the time it existed But the Name will continue to exist and liberate devotees as long as humanity and the world exist

If you are a true believer of the Name, have it always on your lips Do not let your tongue talk about anything unnecessary Think of God, talk of God, and do all actions in the name of God Then you will be purified in thought, word and deed, your life will become altogether holy, and you will carry with you an aura of light wherever you go You will feel you are one with all human beings Those who come in your presence will be elevated

VALUE OF SATSANG

Sri Shankaracharya, the great philosopher-saint of India, says —

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्व निस्सगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्वं निश्चलतत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

"From association with saints comes detachment from the world, from detachment springs freedom from delusion, freedom from delusion leads to one-pointed meditation on Truth, which in turn brings Jivanmukti or liberation in this life"

Shankara here gives importance first to Satsang, to the company of saints who have realised God If you want to realise God, first contact saints and get their grace Then you reach the goal without difficulty Such contact makes your mind detached from worldly things Then the mind goes inward and concentration becomes easy When it is free from restlessness, it becomes perfectly calm and still The motionless state is itself salvation All desires are completely destroyed and your mind becomes pure like a crystal In that pure mind God's light, power and glory become manifest, automatically revealed, and you are aware that God dwells within you and you and He are not different

STORIES ABOUT SAINTS

Ramdas is now going to tell you some stories A saint who was a great votary of the Divine Name, once went on a walk with some of his disciples It was night time On the way, by God's will, as they approached an old building, it suddenly collapsed and the saint with his devotees got buried under the debris Nobody noticed the accident. The people thought that the saint

had left for some unknown place. But when he did not return, they searched for him, but in vain.

After several years, the owner of that house wanted to reconstruct it. On clearing the debris, five skeletons were found underneath. They were held to be those of the missing saint and his disciples. People wanted to pick out the saint's bones and consecrate them in a Samadhi. But how to find out which of the five was the saint's skeleton? Another saint happened to pass that way just then. When approached for solving the problem, he took the bones one by one and held them near his ear. He heard God's Name vibrating in the bones of one skeleton, which he declared to be the saint's. The Name had entered the very bones of that great saint!

There is another story of a woman saint who lived with her Guru serving him. Both were votaries of the Divine Name. She used to prepare cow-dung cakes which are used as fuel in India. She had put them up in the sun for drying. A neighbouring woman had also prepared similar cakes and spread them out near by. When the cakes were dry, this woman saint and her neighbour went to collect them. The cakes had all got mixed up somehow. The neighbour wanted to take, besides her own cakes, the cakes of the saint also. Hearing of it, the Master, whom the woman saint was serving, said he could easily find out the cakes prepared by his disciple who was a votary of the Name. He took each cake and placed it near his ear. In some of them he heard the sound of God's name. Those in which God's Name was ringing were sorted out from the others. Thus the dispute was settled. As the woman saint was always repeating God's Name, even while preparing the cow-dung cakes, they had absorbed the divine vibrations and her Master could hear God's Name from them! Such things are possible.

BENEFIT OF INITIATION FROM GURU

The contact of saints evokes in us the spirit of the Divine. We get faith in Him by their very touch. The Name automatically comes to your mind without any struggle if you get initiation from a saint who has realised God. He takes the responsibility for your repeating the Name constantly. When the Guru is holding us, we can be fearless. There may be danger if *we* hold on to him, but we are quite safe if the Guru holds us and sees that we are taken to the goal. People think that they can reach

the goal without the help of a Guru This is a mistake Whenever your mind is disturbed, the very thought of the Guru stills it and you have peace within you

The Name is compared to a bridge that connects both the banks of a river. The banks represent the personal and impersonal aspects of the Divine. By becoming a votary of the Name you have the vision of the personal God on one side and knowledge of the Impersonal on the other But you must get the taste of the Name, and not take it mechanically The mind must be attuned to the Name All the attributes of God must flash before our mind when we take the Name, because the Name is the very embodiment of God When the mind is attuned to the Name and tastes its sweetness, it is as good as tasting God Himself and we attain liberation—liberation in this very life

THE ESSENCE OF ALL SADHANAS

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa performed severe austerities for twelve years He tried various paths of approach to God He did many mortifying practices peculiar to various cults and creeds He was also doing Puja to the Divine Mother's image in the Kali temple At the end, whenever anybody went to him for advice, he would ask them to take God's Name He did not prescribe any other practice His wife, the Holy Mother Saradamani Devi, whenever approached by any one, also gave the same advice For, the Name embodies the essence of all Sadhanas The moment you take the Name, and its sweetness comes to you, that very moment you are filled with a divine intoxication Ramdas is not telling you about the greatness of the Name by merely reading books From his own personal experience Ramdas can boldly declare that by taking God's Name, people can realise Him By the power of the Name, Ramdas is swimming in an ocean of bliss day and night

HELP IN WORLDLY AFFAIRS

Even in our worldly affairs the Name helps in many ways Ramdas will give an instance When he was living in a rest house in a village in India several years ago, a poor man used to come every day and complain about a false charge made against him in the law court The judgment was pending. If he was put in prison, his family would have to starve Ramdas told him that there was only one way to avert the danger and that

was to take God's Name The poor man in this crisis got faith in the Name which Ramdas gave him and started repeating it He went on repeating Ramnam intensely. The judge acquitted him as innocent He ran up to Ramdas with tears of joy to say that the Name had saved him.

There was another instance A person with an arrest warrant against him, on a charge of theft and misappropriation, ran away from the jurisdiction of the court and took refuge in the Ashram Ramdas asked him to take God's Name, go back, surrender to the police, and get himself arrested Ramdas assured him that if he was really innocent, by the power of the Name he would be released He accepted the advice, went back and was arrested He was taken into custody as an under-trial prisoner There he started writing Ramnam for the whole day, for which a friend provided him with note-books After some time the trial began Strange to say, when the prosecuting officer saw the accused—and it was the same officer who had filed the case against him—he was suddenly impressed by the latter's innocence and pleaded for the acquittal of the accused. The Judge also agreed holding the accused to be an innocent man as he had surrendered himself and courted arrest The papers connected with the case were also somehow mysteriously missing and therefore the trial could not be proceeded with Finally, the accused was acquitted honourably

The power of the Name is such as to convert even your enemy into a friend If you become a votary of the Name, those people who once disliked you will begin to like you, and those who did not want to help you will now help you It is all because your heart has become pure by taking the Name When the heart becomes pure, necessarily your enemy must become your friend It is the impure heart that makes us distrust people and evokes a similar response from them If we give love, we get love

SEEK NOT PETTY BAUBLES

But Ramdas must appeal to you here not to use the Name for gaining merely the material things of the world which are not permanent Aim only at the permanent Let the power of the Name be used for attaining union with God Seek the Eternal and not the petty baubles of the world The power of the Name is infinite. Why use this infinite power for getting merely perish-

able things? Aim at the highest, viz, God and enjoy eternal bliss

Ramdas always tells people to go through the difficulties of life cheerfully He would like to tell you the same thing Take it that God gives you difficulties only because you can remember Him more intensely when you are in trouble So allow things to come and go as He wills Take His Name and surrender yourself to His will By that you will have peace and bliss in all conditions and at all times Leave things to Him and let Him decide what is best for you We pray to him for things which are very often not for our good Here, Ramdas remembers the prayer of a devotee, in which he begs of God not to grant his prayers, as in his ignorance he might ask for things which may not be for his good

ALL NAMES LEAD TO THE SAME GOAL

Q Suppose a man cannot find a Guru in his own religious circle, but only in another religion What should he do in such a case?

Ramdas That Master or Guru may be accepted provided he has belief in all the religions of the world Then he can initiate any one belonging to any religion and give him the Name the latter wants Ramdas has been doing this because he does not belong to any *particular* religion All religions are his. All Prophets are his All incarnations are equally revered by him So, when people ask him to give them the Mantra of Allah, Jesus, Rama, Krishna and so on, Ramdas gives them the Name they ask for. Ramdas does not believe in conversion from one religion to another Each religion is great in its own way and can take us to the goal, provided we are sincere All Names are of the same God, whether of Allah, Jesus, Jehova, Rama, Krishna, Shiva or any other All Names are of the one Reality that is Nameless

It is possible that the devotee may have faith in a particular Name and he may wish to be initiated with only that Name. But he should know that the other Names are also equally potent He may follow a particular Prophet as his guide and look upon him as his all in all, but that does not mean he should decry other Prophets We should not be so narrow-minded as to feel that our Guru alone is great, that our path is the only path, and our Name the only right Name This view is gradually disappearing from

the world of late, as people are increasingly realising that all paths lead to the same goal

Q How can we make children in the house repeat the Name constantly?

Ramdas We must repeat it ourselves constantly, and by so doing we must set an example and create the proper atmosphere for the children to take the Name

CLING TO ONE GURU

Q I have some trouble in controlling the mental faculties I have been thinking of going to America to join an Ashram and stay there for some years Can you give me initiation if it would help me?

Ramdas Have you received initiation from anyone?

Q I have known about Kriya Yoga from Swami Y—

Ramdas Have you received from him any Name?

Q No

Ramdas What is the method of your Sadhana? Is it a secret?

Q I did not get any regular initiation I have been practising meditation trying to get the consciousness of the Divine

Ramdas Have you not found peace by these practices?

Q Not quite yet

Ramdas: Have you been asked to worship or adore any deity?

Q It is just the Guru to whom we have to show all devotion, and to no other form of God

Ramdas Guru is the representative of God on earth So, if you have trust in the Guru, you can be saved Why should you go from Guru to Guru? One Guru will do Guru stands for God on earth As you have accepted the guidance of one, it is better to cling to him Which Name do you hold dear? Which Name do you like most?

Q Krishna's Name

Ramdas Then take it Repeat it and it will give you peace It will take you to the goal Your Guru will not be displeased if you take Krishna's Name

Q My Guru is not alive

Ramdas Guru never dies He may not be alive in body The body is not the Guru, The immortal Spirit is the Guru

and the Spirit never dies The Guru can inspire you even after he drops the body

THE GURU MANTRA

Q There are some persons here who have had the great chance of hearing Swami Ramdas chanting the Mantra of Ram Nam Although they are practising another Mantra, they feel great sweetness to remember the Mantra they heard from Ramdas' lips What does it mean for them?

Ramdas As Ramdas said just now, we should have equal regard for all Names of God They are all equally powerful Ramdas is habituated to repeating the Ram Mantra and therefore he chanted it There are so many Mantras, but one must repeat only one Mantra for one's practice It should be the Mantra with which he is initiated by his Guru He must be faithful to that Mantra and that alone will take him to the goal You may repeat other Mantras in chorus with friends, but the faith in the Mantra given by the Guru should be unshakable It is the boat that takes you to God across the sea of Samsara

When Ram Mantra is sung in Ramdas' presence in chorus by a large group, all the people who chant it get peace and joy, although they may be usually repeating a different Mantra So also, if you are in the presence of another saint and along with him you repeat the Mantra which he is used to, you will get the same peace That shows that all Mantras have the same power and there is no real difference But the Mantra with which you are initiated by the Guru should be the mainstay for you That should be the only Mantra for your regular repetition and meditation, and you must see that you are fully filled with that Mantra Do you agree with what Ramdas has said?

Q Yes, entirely

Ramdas Chanting of God's Name creates vibrations in us that keep our mind and senses harmonised with the divine Spirit within us All conflict within us ceases We enjoy ineffable peace Our entire life in all its aspects is attuned to the Divine Life We bring ourselves in contact with the Divine so much that divine harmony, divine peace and bliss flow into our mind, senses and body, and we remain calm, serene, absorbed in the super-conscious state of God We transcend all relative planes and enter into the Absolute Some people want to prepare the

body for receiving God into them, but that is not the way We must bring down God's power and glory into us through chanting His name through utter devotion, love, surrender and constant remembrance of Him Then our entire physical being gets purified and illumined through and through by His power

WHERE TO CONCENTRATE?

Q While speaking about meditation, you said that we should concentrate in the forehead between the eye-brows Are there not certain cases where concentration is done in the heart?

Ramdas Yes Concentration between the eye-brows was Ramdas' way So he spoke about But there are some who concentrate in the heart centre Ramana Maharshi's advice was that one should concentrate in the heart He was asked whether one should not concentrate between the eye-brows He said that with different people the method of concentration is different Some concentrate between the eye-brows and some in the heart, according to their temperament or inclination, or as advised by their spiritual Master

URDHVA-GATI AND ADHO-GATI

In meditation, all the forces of your being have to be raised upward That is called Urdhva-gati, which means going upward Adho-gati means going downward When you allow your vital forces to go downwards, you are immersed in worldly pleasures If you are to be free from these, all the vital forces should be raised until the Prana reaches the Sahasrara—the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head Those who are immersed in worldly pleasures have their looks usually downwards Those who are trying to raise themselves to the Divine, have an upward look You will find that most of the pictures representing great sages and teachers of the world show the pupils of their eyes directed upwards Partially they are hidden in the upper lid This is the case with most people even when they are deeply absorbed in thinking That means, you are trying to raise yourself beyond a certain stage in order to get light or inspiration from above

FOR INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL BALANCE

Q About the choice of the Chakras, or centres of meditation, I hear two theories One is that one should make the

most of one's strongest faculty, that is to say, those who are very intellectual should concentrate on the forehead, and those who are very emotional should concentrate on the heart Another view is that it should be done the other way in order to balance the intellect and emotions

Ramdas That is to be decided according to one's own temperament You are right when you say that, for gaining balance, emotional people should concentrate at the centre of the eye-brows and intellectual people at the heart Later on, you give up both the centres when you are absorbed in the super-conscious state For, then, "your centre will be everywhere and circumference nowhere" There will be no place without a centre for you and so your circumference will be nowhere

THE SIX CHAKRAS

Q Should one ever choose the Sahasrara Chakra as the centre for meditation?

Ramdas It is not generally done as it is very difficult You have to start from the lower centres so that you can gradually raise yourself from within to that highest centre It is only to raise the Kundalini from the Muladhara that you concentrate upon these centres Even the Ajna Chakra is very difficult to concentrate upon That is the centre between the eye-brows For some people it is next to impossible The heart centre seems to be easier for them as the Muladhara is nearer to the heart centre than to the Ajna Chakra

They say, when the Kundalini is roused by the contact of a saint, a desire for God-realisation springs up in the person When the Kundalini comes to any one centre, certain peculiar symptoms are visible in him From the Muladhara when it rises to the Swadhishtana Chakra, the aspirant develops dispassion for worldly objects and enjoyments When it reaches the Manipura Chakra, it is said that the man rejects everything relating to the enjoyment of his senses, and his mind becomes more and more resolute upon getting at the Divine When it comes to the heart centre, the Anahata, he develops one-pointed devotion to God, and love and compassion for all the creatures in the world Whenever he sees suffering, he cannot bear it and he strives to alleviate it His heart melts at the distress of others When the Kundalini reaches the Visuddhi Chakra, at the throat, the aspirant is averse to talking about anything but God From there

it reaches the Ajna Chakra between the eye-brows, and he sees visions of divine forms, lights and flashes When it reaches the highest Chakra, the Sahasrara, at the crown of the head, the aspirant loses consciousness of the body and goes into Nirvikalpa Samadhi, in which he realises that he and God are one The distinction between him and God is entirely lost, and he feels that he is God Himself, whom he has so long striven to realise This is attainment of Jnana—knowledge of the Truth, the knowledge that he is Brahman himself

After this experience, he continues to live and move in the world like any one of us, but his consciousness is always of the highest realisation in which there is no distinction between him and God He always lives in that consciousness After the attainment of Jnana, there is no fall for him But he can go to another state called Para-Bhakti In that state, he looks upon the whole universe as the expression of the static immortal Spirit which he experienced during Nirvikalpa Samadhi So he does not see any distinction between the manifest and the unmanifest, between matter and Spirit

SCIENCE CANNOT COMPREHEND THE ABSOLUTE

Now the scientists have found out that matter is pure energy, that the atoms in every object are vibrating with varying intensity It is energy itself Because of the difference in vibrations we see objects in different forms; everywhere there is nothing but energy and movement, nothing but life

This is what the scientists have found out This is of course a great discovery But they have not gone beyond that Beyond that, is the static and silent Spirit They have not been able to reach it yet, because by researches on the material plane they cannot find out that Absolute Truth They can reach it only by stilling the intellect and the senses The scientists are working only on the intellectual plane The intellect can comprehend only the relative, and not the Absolute It cannot understand or discover what is beyond the physical and material plane

Verily, life assumes many forms We see certain things as static But really they are not static Every particle of those objects is vibrating with the highest velocity which the naked eye cannot see Just as we can see even very tiny objects with the help of a microscope, so to the eye of a realised soul, the whole universe is nothing but a play of energy, of vibration, of move-

ment, going on in the bosom of the Infinite, the silent and static Spirit And the realised soul sees that the dynamic is not different from the static Rather, he sees one as an expression of the other

MEDITATION ON SAHASRARA

Q When people feel something going on on the top of the head, like knocking, or moving the arms about, should they meditate in that centre, or should they avoid it?

Ramdas. They should not meditate on that centre It is not safe to do so It is enough if they meditate on the Ajna Chakra It is better to concentrate on a lower centre, rather than on the Sahasrara Chakra By concentrating between the eye-brows you feel a throbbing, a knocking, or a creeping sensation, as if some ants are moving about on the crown of your head At that time, concentration directly on that Chakra is not good You have to concentrate on the centre of the forehead only until you get the super-conscious state

To go beyond the Ajna centre is very difficult Before the Kundalini goes further up, it has to break the knot here,—the knot made of the three Nandis,—Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna When the Kundalini reaches this junction, the knocking is tremendous As soon as this knot is broken, the Kundalini rises higher and joins the Sahasrara Chakra

Though breaking this knot is difficult, by strenuous practice and grace of the Guru, it will gradually open and, suddenly, then, one day, you will lose yourself in the super-conscious state, forgetting the body and the outer world Even if you sit for five minutes in that state, you will have reached the goal It is not necessary that you should be sitting there for a long time When some people enter this state, they are unconscious of the world for days together Some come down to the physical plane within a short time In any case, once the experience is gained, it is never lost

THE CASE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

It is said of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa that Totapuri pressed a glass piece between his eye-brows and made him go into Nirvikalpa Samadhi when the Kundalini Shakti joins the Ishwara on the forehead It need not be so in all cases Even without any external aid, the Kundalini can reach the Sahasrara

Chakra by a gradual course of Sadhana Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was clinging hard to the personal form of a deity—the Divine Mother Sometimes he denied even the higher ideal and did not want it But Totapuri told him that adherence to the personal ideal was not the whole thing He gave Ramakrishna the higher experience of the Impersonal

There is something like "touch and go," with the visions of Personal God They cannot be permanently before us We see the vision for some time, then we lose it and on that account we feel extremely unhappy They call this state 'Viraha,' which means the agony of separation from the Beloved It is a state of intermittent joy and sorrow Totapuri was watching the struggle of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa So he asked Ramakrishna to go beyond the Personal But Ramakrishna could not easily do that So Totapuri asked him one day to sit for meditation and, when he sat, questioned him 'What do you see now?'

Ramakrishna said, 'Mother Kali is standing before me'

Totapuri 'Go beyond it'

Ramakrishna 'I cannot'

He was so much attached to the personal form of Kali, the Mother, that he did not want to give it up His adherence, affection and love for that ideal was so whole-hearted that he wanted to have that form always before him But that was not possible Forms appear and disappear So Totapuri had now to forcibly raise Ramakrishna higher He asked him to concentrate on the forehead, between the eye-brows, and pricked that spot with a glass piece As soon as this was done, it seems Ramakrishna said he saw a flash of light, and then a sword cut the figure of Kali standing before his mind into two parts Thereafter he was lost in Nirvikalpa Samadhi For days together he remained in that state He was not aware of the body or of the surroundings He had to be fed by others He had not even the consciousness to swallow what was put into his mouth

MILESTONES ON THE PATH

Q When we are meditating, sometimes we tremble and oscillate What is it?

Ramdas When we are in a state of Shuddha Sattva, some manifestations take place in us They are called the Ashtabhavas, or the eight kinds of manifestation Horripulation,

trembling of the body, profuse tears flowing from the eyes, laughing and dancing in ecstasy and choking of the throat while speaking are some of the signs We must transcend these emotional symptoms They all belong to a plane in which the heart is filled with Prem or love of God At such times we behave strangely and people take us to be either hysterical or mad We should not allow ourselves to be over-powered by these emotions, nor think that we have thereby reached a high state We must go upward to that realm in which all these emotions are balanced with the intellect, illumined with the light of God

These signs are only milestones on the path. We must pass all these and reach a state when we feel one with the Divine, and our heart and intellect are tuned together and harmonised, without the exhibition of anything extraordinary or abnormal in us There must be perfect balance between the purified emotion and illumined intellect. It is at this stage that intuition starts working in us We should not do things guided either by mere reason, or by mere emotion All our actions should stand the test of enlightened reason as well as pure emotion If we go only by the promptings of reason, we make mistakes So also we go wrong when we are swayed only by the impulse of emotion

RISE OF KUNDALINI IN THE BHAKTA

Q When the Ajna Chakra is awakened, does it mean that the lower Chakras are awakened also?

Ramdas. Yes When you meditate on the Ajna Chakra, you awaken the Kundalini in the Muladhara Chakra, and make it rise through the lower, gradually to the Ajna Chakra Then you too take it further up to the Sahasrara Chakra It is like sucking up the water from a deep well to a higher level by a pump

But in the path of Bhakti Yoga, the devotee is not directly concerned with the Kundalini at all He neither watches her progress, nor cares to know whether she is awakened or not His heart goes towards God in all love and pure aspiration Automatically, by the power of devotion the Kundalini rises from centre to centre and reaches that highest state as his love for God develops He does not watch the Kundalini, but all the same it rises and goes up Due to its rise from centre to centre, changes go on, but the devotee is unmindful of them

When a hard-hearted man who has no sympathy for the poor

practises devotion, such as continuous remembrance of God, he is seen after some time to be completely changed His heart becomes soft, loving and kind to people who are in distress When this change has taken place you must know that his Kundalini is awake and has reached his heart centre When the Kundalini comes to the heart centre a hard-hearted man becomes soft-hearted, the miser becomes a liberal man, and a man who had no sympathy for others goes about relieving their distress which he would never have done before

Q Does it mean that there is no physical reaction in general?

Ramdas There cannot be any physical reaction, but there will be psychological reactions Changes are taking place within you, when you are having visions and trances in which you are forgetful of the body As a result of this you may go into ecstasy and your face and body will shine with a spiritual lustre Internal changes are tremendous at this time

ANAHATA SOUND IN THE HEART CENTRE

Q When bells are heard ringing during meditation, does the sound come from the heart centre?

Ramdas Yes The heart centre is called Anahata and the sound is called Anahata-nada It is at the Ajna centre you see light Generally, they say, from the heart centre the sound 'Om' comes When a bell begins to ring, you first hear the tinkling sound and when it continues, you hear 'Om, Om, Om'!

Q Is it the same thing as the sound of a gong? Among the musical instruments in India, the gong also is perhaps one?

Ramdas Yes When some musical instruments are played, you will hear the 'Om' sound coming out of them In temples in India there are big bells and when they are sounded, one can hear for nearly half a minute, or even one minute, the sound of 'Om' continuously going on, so soothing to the mind until it slowly fades away They say it awakens God in the temple or turns His attention towards you These bells are generally hung just in front of the image You go and strike them informing God, as it were, 'I have come! O Lord, Give me Your grace'

KARMA AND PUNISHMENT

Q It is said that God never punishes Still there is such a thing as the law of Karma

Ramdas God, indeed, made the law of Karma But He

never punishes Ramdas will tell you how If you do an evil deed, you have surely to suffer for it. The Law has been made by God and it works automatically If you do good deeds, you will reap good fruits That also is His law Supposing a bad man, after suffering for his sins, wants to do good deeds, but that his mind does not allow him to be good, then God is there to be called upon, to give him strength to desist from doing evil actions God forgives one for having done evil if he truly repents and He helps him to improve his life and become good He is ever ready to accept one who goes to Him

WE PUNISH OURSELVES

What is good action and what is bad action? Good action is that which takes you towards God Bad action is that which takes you away from Him We ignore Him and so we are moving in the cycle of Samsara, of action and reaction, cause and effect He keeps aloof until you turn towards Him Yet He watches over you and makes you grow through experience When your experience is complete, when you know that you are caught by your own faults in the coils of this action and reaction, you surrender to Him, saying "God, I am now yours Make me free from this bondage of action and reaction Make me always live the true life" You now remember Him, draw strength and inspiration from Him and then walk on the path of righteousness Instead of taking the thorny path, you go by the royal road God does not reject you when you turn to Him a penitent. He accepts you. He loves you He is all forgiveness and all kindness He never punishes We punish ourselves by our bad actions We suffer and then go to Him

Here Ramdas remembers the story of the prodigal son Disobeying his father, he went out and lived a most reckless life, wasting all the wealth he had got from his father But after suffering intensely as a result of his bad life, he came back to the father The father did not reject him, but readily accepted him and forgave him It was not the father who punished the son, but the son suffered by his own evil deeds The Bhagavad Gita says that we are our own friends and our own enemies

आत्मैवह्यात्मनो वन्धुरात्मैवरिपुरात्मनः

If we ignore God and forget Him, we become our own enemies If we remember God and turn our mind towards Him, we become our own friends 'As we sow, so we reap'

Q In that case, we cannot say that it is God who tests us with problems

Ramdas He does not test us at all He watches over us He has given the Law—good deeds, good fruits, bad deeds, bad fruits We learn by our experience and eschew evil deeds

Q Can we say that the soul had a beginning and it was created by God, or did it ever exist?

Ramdas The soul is God, that means it is ever-existent and never born

REPETITION OF NAME IS NEVER IN VAIN

Q Regarding the saving power of the Name, it is said if the Name is repeated even once, the sinner is saved In some cases, repetition has gone on for some years without much beneficial results How can you explain this?

Ramdas Your question itself contains the answer to your problem Ramdas has said that you must put your whole heart and soul into the repetition Then, if the Name is repeated even once, it will bring about the result you aspire for Ceaseless and continuous repetition is necessary to develop that love, faith and whole-hearted devotion which we should have in the Name which is God Himself

You may not be able to find, in the earlier stages, any change taking place on the surface, but in the inner consciousness the change is going on Many people, after repetition of God's Name for several years, say that they have not at all improved It is because they have not known the changes that have taken place within them When you want to break a big stone by giving it heavy strokes with a hammer, every stroke helps You give nineteen strokes The stone does not break Now a friend comes who did not see you hammering the stone In his presence you give another blow to the stone and it at once breaks The friend may think that the stone was broken at one stroke But actually it broke because of all the twenty strokes Until the last stroke was given, it appeared as if no change had taken place in the stone But the particles within have been separated by each stroke and the last stroke finished the process So also, when a devotee repeats God's Name constantly, changes do occur within him which he may not notice It takes time for the change to be completed and the entire transformation to come up to the surface

The Name is thus never taken by anybody in vain It must produce the desired effect sooner or later It is only a question of time because the deep-rooted desires are difficult to uproot within a short period of practice

PRAY TO GOD FOR FAITH

But in Ramdas' case, he does not know whether he was giving the last blow when he took up the Name For, he at once began to find the sweetness of it so powerful that it held him in its grip His mind was bathing in the sea of peace and joy and he was drinking the nectar every minute of his life All the desires for sense objects automatically vanished. Ramdas must have repeated the Name before, but he did not know that All may not find the sweetness immediately, but gradually, as their love for God increases, they are sure to find it Our love for God is generally very weak so long as we are drawn towards the objects of the senses Therefore, we have to pray to God to give us strong love for and faith in Him so that His Name may remain constantly on our lips and it may taste sweet to us Such prayers are necessary because God's grace alone will enable us to repeat the Name continuously

AT ONCE THE WITNESS AND THE PLAYER

Q How can we explain the Lila of God, especially when we see different religions springing up and differing from each other on many points?

Ramdas Lila means play When you look at the play, you stand apart from it, in which you do not see either good or evil, desirable or undesirable There may be many characters in a drama, some good and some bad Each one on the stage of this world is playing the part given to him or her Your attitude towards all of them is equal You appreciate the part played by each one, whether he be the hero or the villain You have no likes and dislikes unless, of course, the part is not played well by any particular actor It may be an actor personating the role of a robber, if he plays his part well, you appreciate him So also you appreciate another who takes the king's part, or a saint's part and plays it well You do not dislike the man who acted as the robber, or adore the man who acted as the saint Similarly, in the case of the play on the world stage also, we must have an equal attitude towards all the actors We must have no likes and

dislikes. It is God Himself who appears as all beings in the world. So you should see every one as God and everything as a play of the Lord. Your attitude should be alike towards all,—good as well as bad, saints as well as sinners. You look upon all as manifestations of the Divine, playing on the world stage. This is the position of one who truly witnesses the Lila. When one goes within and finds the real Self, and sees the universe as a manifestation of that Self, he does not see in it anything wrong or evil. Shakespeare has said,

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

You are here to play your own part. Play it well, conscious that your inner Self is witnessing the play. Inwardly, be the detached witness while, outwardly, you play your allotted part.

Every religious teacher calls upon you to love the sinner with as much ardour as you love a saint. You should love the sinner as deep within him dwells the same Spirit that dwells in the saint also. The outward differences that you see belong to the Lila aspect, which is external. But, from the point of view of the Spirit within, there is no difference. All are equally manifestations of the Divine.

BHAKTI LEADS TO JNANA AND BEYOND

Q. Can knowledge alone lead to realisation?

Ramdas: Knowledge of what?

Q. By knowledge I mean Jnana Yoga.

Ramdas: Bhakti leads to Jnana automatically and also leads you further onward. Jnana is the realisation of the Impersonal Self. Jnana makes you know that you are the all-pervading, static, calm, eternal Self, without name, form or movement. This knowledge can be attained by the practice of Bhakti Yoga. Yoga means union with God. After attaining Jnana, realising you are the impersonal Self, there is something more for you to do. You cannot remain constantly in that divine super-consciousness of the Impersonal. When you come down and move in the work-a-day world, the sense of diversity may obsess you and cause confusion or disturbance. So, in order to remove that risk, you have to look upon the whole universe as the expression of the Self. You have to get stabilised in Jnana and attain the Sahaja state wherein you always see the whole world as God or Brahman. This is achieved by Para-bhakti. Then you see yourself

in every form and will never get disturbed Then you will be supremely happy You have heard the story of the man who fixed mirrors everywhere in his room and, seeing his own reflections all round, enjoyed supreme happiness.

ALL UNIVERSE IS GOD: NONE SUPERIOR

Q Does a saint see himself as superior to others?

Ramdas When the great saint, Swami Ram Tirtha, went to America, some friends asked him, 'Who are you?' The Swami replied, 'I am God, and so are you' If you find that you are God, you will see everybody as God You do not think that you are superior to anybody If a person thinks so, he has not seen God When a person has realised God, he sees God alone everywhere

You, friends, ask Ramdas some questions and he replies to them This is done automatically But it is only a play, part of God's Lila So many people come and tell Ramdas that they are miserable Ramdas then says, "O God, this is your Lila You are everywhere, You are everybody, and still You bring this tale of woe to Ramdas and ask him to solve Your problem This is all Your play The teacher is Yourself, the taught is Yourself The Guru is Yourself and the disciple is Yourself God is Yourself, the devotee is Yourself The whole universe made up of all the multitudinous men women, creatures and things is Yourself and nothing but Yourself" This is the reality, this is the truth, verified by the experience of the greatest saints and sages of the world They could see everything as themselves, as in a mirror In this realisation, how can one feel he is superior to others?

HOW GRACE WORKS

Q How can Grace be explained?

Ramdas The ways of Grace are mysterious You struggle for it and you do not get it Without any struggling, sometimes you get it This working of Grace is very difficult to make out, because it is governed by something which is beyond all laws It is not bound by any conditions, regulations or rules It transcends everything, breaks through everything and works in its own way You are wonder-struck when Grace comes to persons apparently undeserving, and the so-called deserving are still waiting for Grace But one thing we find Grace flows towards

one through saints who are the purest vehicles of God The contact of a saint, Ramdas knows, has changed the hearts of many who were living a life of sin Grace came to them in a mysterious way There were so many others who were going to the same saint, struggling on the path, and yet they did not get grace So it is difficult to explain how Grace works

EVEN SINNERS ARE TRANSFORMED

In the life of Lord Gauranga, the famous saint of Bengal, we find an instance of two ruffians who were transformed by the grace of a saint These two men were given to a violent sort of life They were harassing innocent people This was during the reign of a Muslim king Lord Gauranga, the great devotee of Lord Krishna, used to sing God's Name and go about in the streets with a party of followers doing Kirtan Some people who had no devotion for God mocked at Gauranga and the Kirtan party The two ruffians also joined the critics But the devotees did not mind the opposition They went their own way singing God's Name On one occasion the two ruffians tried their best to disturb the Bhajan party One of them took a stone and flung it at them It struck the forehead of Nityananda, a disciple of Gauranga A deep wound was caused and blood began to gush out from it Nityananda saw the man who stoned him, approached him with a smile, and embraced him, saying "Brother, I do not at all mind your injuring me, but I would beg of you to utter the name of Hari at least once" These saintly words and touch of Nityananda without a trace of anger, melted the hearts of the two ruffians They at once fell at his feet and from that time were completely changed Their lives so far had been marked by nothing but a series of sins and the worst of crimes, and yet, in an instant, they became transformed They joined the party of Gauranga, and began to sing God's names with the other devotees After this transformation took place, they could never do harm to anybody They became gentle, mild and loving towards all

GRACE IS ALL IN ALL

So you see how Grace comes in a mysterious way When Grace comes to us we really feel we do not deserve it It wonderfully works on us because God's love, kindness and mercy towards us is really unimaginable The question is always asked

as to what are the conditions to be fulfilled in order to get Grace No one knows It is said we have to be pure How can purity come to us? It can come only by His grace We struggle hard day and night to keep the mind pure, but we do not succeed So many bad thoughts and evil desires come and harass us Even though we strive our utmost to keep them away, they do not go When, however, His grace descends on us, we repeat His name and by the simple repetition of it, all the low desires and impurities of our mind are at once washed away

A devotee rightly says "O God, I remember You because You remembered me first" We can get His remembrance only through His grace, only through that remembrance can our mind be purified, and by purification of the mind alone we can see Him When we see Him, we see by His grace His presence everywhere So Grace is at the beginning, Grace is in the middle, and Grace is at the end By ourselves we are utterly helpless Without realising this truth, Grace cannot come to us But we think that by our own efforts we are able to do so much To such people Ramdas says "Your spiritual practices should be done in order to know that through them alone you cannot get Him You can get Him only by His grace"

Man thinks that by his struggle alone he can attain God He thinks so because of his ego-sense Let the ego struggle on Give it a long rope, as they say, and make it toil and moil Finally, the ego realises its helplessness and surrenders to God Now God's grace comes God is called *Anatha-natha,* which means the Helper of the helpless Unless we become helpless and feel helpless, He will not become our helper So long as we can do anything by ourselves, we will not be able to attain Him The ego must be eradicated by total surrender to God This surrender cannot come to us without His grace We cannot even bend before the Divine will unless He makes us do so That means Grace must work in us from the very start

AN ANALOGY

When we churn curds to get butter out of it we go on churning and then stop a while Butter is formed only after we stop churning If we go on churning without stopping we cannot collect butter So we struggle and struggle until we give up the struggle and kneel ourselves at His feet Then we get illumination, we get His Darshan When a man wants to hit a mark, he

takes the bow and arrow and pulls the string of the bow to some extent and lets the arrow go If he goes on pulling and pulling the string of the bow without letting the arrow go, the arrow will never hit the mark So also, however long and hard we try to put down this ego-sense, in the course of such practice, at every step we meet with nothing but failure At last, when we find our struggle has ended in nothing but defeat, we feel "O God, I am helpless It is You alone who can save me It is not by my strength that I can meet You, but by your grace alone " Now we stop struggling and in that instant His light dawns on us. His grace has been working in us from the very start, and that alone has now given us His vision, His experience and His realisation

So, God must be pleased with us and then we are saved On what condition is He pleased? We do not know Let us only wait for His grace, let us keep our hearts open and the nectar of Grace will flow into it Let us contact saints, hear their words, try to understand them, and open the windows of our heart for their influence to enter and transform us This is the only thing which a struggling soul should do God by His grace directs the struggling soul to contact a saint, a pure illumined soul, who alone can guide him, shed his radiance on him, and awaken him from within So with an open mind and with a faithful heart we must go to meet saints We have to approach them in all humility and meekness and allow the light to get into our heart and dispel darkness from it Now we are illumined.

REMEMBRANCE BRINGS HUMILITY

Q Gandhiji, in one of his letters to his disciples, has said that humility cannot be cultivated

Ramdas Humility can come to us only when we constantly think of the greatness of God Compared to His greatness, our individuality dwindles into nothing When a little man sees a big man, he knows how little he is But in the absence of such a man he may pose himself to be a very big man In darkness a glow-worm may think that it is all-important, but when the sun shines, you cannot see where the glow-worm is So, when we bring into our mind the greatness, glory and magnificence of God, we necessarily become meek and humble and our ego dwindles into nothing It is not that we have to create humility When we remember God, humility comes to us automatically, because

in the presence of the infinite God, who pervades everywhere and is controlling the entire universe, we are nothing Therefore, our ego must melt away to enable us to realise what we are in reality

EGO DOES NOT EXIST

Q Is the ego real?

Ramdas Ramdas will tell you a story as narrated by Ramana Maharshi He rightly contends that there is no ego at all Ego is false He is an impostor Somehow he has taken possession of us and makes us dance to his tune, bringing to us miseries and worries If anybody says we must drive away the fellow from our heart, the question is how we can drive away one who is not there at all If you peel an onion to find the seed within, you peel, peel and peel until you come to the last layer and you find there is no seed at all So if you try to find where this ego is and try to analyse yourself and find out the source of this ego, you will realise there is no ego at all So Ramana Maharshi asks us to find out by self-enquiry where this ego exists When you search for him and know he is not there, you realise you are the eternal Self So long as you are under the illusion that such a thing as ego exists, you are in his clutches As the ego does not really exist, we speak of him not as ego but as ego-sense or ego-consciousness

A STORY

Ramana Maharshi himself gives a beautiful story Once a man invited his son-in-law, who was living far away, to go to him during the holidays When the letter was received by the son-in-law, there was another person near him, who also read the contents of the letter That person thought it was a nice occasion for him to make the best of When the son-in-law got into the train this person also boarded the same train, and at the destination both got down from the train The son-in-law was greeted by his brother-in-law who had come to the station in a car When the son-in-law got into the car, this adventurer also got into it The son-in-law thought that this person might be some friend of the family of his father-in-law His brother-in-law thought that this person might be a friend of the son-in-law They all reached the father-in-law's house and the guests were received with great honour and given rooms to stay in and they were quite happy At the time of meals, this impostor would go

and sit first, and before the others he would begin eating. Sometimes he even went into the kitchen to demand certain kinds of food that he wanted. Though this was noticed by the father-in-law, he did not tell him anything lest he should wound his feelings, as he thought that the person was his son-in-law's friend. The impostor was also freely going to the son-in-law's room and using his shirts, ties, shoes and so on, without asking him. Though the son-in-law got annoyed at this, he did not say anything as he took him to be a member or friend of his father-in-law's family. Thus, from both sides this impostor was allowed full liberty and was having a very fine time.

Things went on like this, but a time came when both the father-in-law and the son-in-law were tired of the fellow's behaviour. They did not know how to deal with him as each thought he was the friend of the other. At last, when the father-in-law could not tolerate any longer, he decided to go to his son-in-law and ask why he had brought such a man with him. At the very moment the son-in-law also wanted to ask the father-in-law "What a pest you have here! Wherefrom has he come? He does not seem to be a member of the family. He comes into my room and uses everything I have. All my clean shirts have been used by him." When they went together into a room to discuss privately about this impostor, the impostor noticed that they were making enquiries about him, and suddenly disappeared.

So, in this case of the ego also, a mere enquiry makes the impostor disappear. In fact, you will find there was no impostor at all. It was only an illusion caused by your ignorance. The ignorance is removed by Atma-Vichar or self-enquiry. But you do not make the enquiry. You are so much devoted to him and do what he likes you to do and therefore he makes you dance to his tune. He brings about nothing but misery for you.

OUTGROW RITUALISM

Q. If we are equally attracted by two different ways, or two different religions, can we mix them both, or should we choose any one of them?

Ramdas. In fundamentals or essentials, all religions are one. In non-essentials and ceremonials they appear to be different.

Q. In practice these rituals and ceremonies often help us. Don't they?

Ramdas. They help, but they hinder also, when we want to

rise higher and free ourselves. They bind us down sometimes. If we accept any religion, we must go to the essence of that religion, and then we will find there is nothing in it against any other religion. When the plant is young it has to be protected with fencing, but it should not be within the fence for all time. When it grows into a tree the fence is removed. It must out-grow the fence. These rituals and ceremonies may be necessary for us to protect us from harmful influences from outside until we reach a certain stage. But when we grow to a higher stature in spirituality, these have to be dispensed with. We must not get ourselves enmeshed in these rituals as they bind us down to a narrow view about others and accentuate the differences we make between one religion and another. So our progress or growth is hampered. We must out-grow them and attain freedom ultimately in God,—in the vast universal spirit of God. In that state we will be inspired to love all people alike, to whatever religion, sect or creed they may belong.

Q. If we find our own rituals do not help us in our spiritual progress, what are we to do?

Ramdas: If the practices which you are going through help you in attaining your goal of God-realisation, then stick to them by all means. If they hamper your progress and narrow down your views, it is better that you think twice before you have them any longer. Change them as you require so that they might help you to get out of the narrow self and behold the Divine everywhere. This is what all scriptures ask us to do. We must widen our vision so that we can see God in all beings and in all creatures without any distinction,—man-made distinction, —which has built separate walls dividing humanity into compartments. To realise God is to realise unity, and our practices must help us to destroy diversity and realise unity. Our practices must be such only as would help us in attaining this vision and experience. Otherwise they become stumbling blocks on our path.

GOD IS ONE

Q. How do we realise the unity of all religions?

Ramdas: Everybody readily admits that there is only one God. There is no such thing as separate God for each religion. There is only one God and we are all His children. As such we must look upon ourselves in that relationship which binds

us together, by accepting one God as the Parent of us all   Still, we are fighting among ourselves even in the field of religion, as if there are different Gods for different religions—one for the Hindus, another for the Christians, another for the Muslims and yet another for the Zoroastrians   This must go

If we are conscious of the fact that there is only one God our vision will be universal   We shall love everybody in the same way as we love our brothers in the house, because we are born of the same parents   If we entrap ourselves in the separate cages of our own religion, we are apt to look down on those persons who do not belong to our religion as different from us, and consequently we may have no love for them   It is this sense of differentiation, our likes and dislikes, that causes pain and misery to us   We must therefore destroy these demarcations, these boundaries that are man-made   We must have a wider vision in life in which we see that all of us are children of one Divine Parent   In that case, we can live in harmony with one and all, and help one another instead of fighting and destroying each other

Discord prevails in the world because we have not found out the secret of our inner spiritual kinship, which is the real kinship   We see only the surface where there are differences, which cause conflict and discord resulting in misery and unhappiness to mankind

GENEVA,
31st August 1954.

Conversation with Father Coneus on the way to the Monastery at Broc, Jean Herbert acting as the interpreter

WHEN IS ABSOLUTE PURITY POSSIBLE ?

Jean Herbert After his talk with you the other day, Father Coneus expressed that your views agreed very well with those of St John of the Cross for whom the Father has great reverence.

Ramdas: Is it so?

Father Coneus Is absolute purity possible on the physical plane?

Ramdas Yes It is possible when the mind is completely absorbed in God through constant remembrance and meditation, which takes one away from all the lower desires to the static, changeless and formless aspect of God By complete withdrawal of oneself from the plane of the body, mind and senses and their contact with the external world, one gets into a super-conscious state called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. After one has experienced this Samadhi, one's desires are all destroyed One begins to see the whole universe as the manifestation of Truth that one has realised during Nirvikalpa Samadhi

F C People say the whole of nature is the manifestation of God, but they also admit that they have not experienced the static aspect of Truth Is this possible?

Ramdas No Unless one experiences the static aspect first, one cannot see the world as the manifestation of the Truth

F.C Then they must be talking things only in a state of emotion

Ramdas Yes

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INCARNATIONS AND SAINTS

Jean Herbert Father Coneus is very happy again that your experiences tally entirely with those of St John of the Cross, who was a great mystic This is the greatest compliment he can give you.

F C Jesus had been accepted as God What difference is there between Jesus and other saints?

Ramdas It is like the difference between the water in a well and in a river in floods The water in a well is made use of only by a few people of a locality, whereas the river water in floods reaches a vast area and caters to a large number of people Saints are like well water and incarnations like Jesus are as the river in floods

F C So the difference is only in quantity and not in quality?

Ramdas Yes

F C Christians think Jesus is the source of their inspiration, whereas the sages got grace from God, i e, they prayed that God may bless people

Ramdas Jesus said He and His Father were one, which meant that, though he was one with God, he was also maintaining his individuality as His son Sages also maintain the same relationship with God, that is, as one with Him and at the same time separate from Him They assumed the relationship of either His child or servant

F C What is the difference between those who realise God and God who descends in the world as an incarnation?

Ramdas Men struggle on the path of God-realisation from their ignorant stage, whereas God who takes a human form is not caught up in ignorance and has therefore no struggle to attain knowledge

FRIBOURG,
31st August 1954

Conversation with Rev. Dom Barras, Abbot, Chartreuse de la Valsainte, Broc (Fribourg), Switzerland, when Ramdas visited the Monastery along with Father Coneus and Jean Herbert

WAY TO PERFECT PURITY

Abbot. I would like to know from your experience if it is possible to be free from all passions, and if so how?

Ramdas. It is possible to be perfectly free from passions. When by the grace of God you remember Him constantly without break, your mind becomes absolutely pure and free from all passions. The mind is then like that of a child,—guileless and innocent. It will never be contaminated by contact with external objects, once the light of God enters into all parts of your being, both mental and physical. This is the absolute purity which you attain through the grace of God. As the Hindus say: 'The seed of desire is burnt.' A seed which is burnt does not sprout even if it is sown. If the seed of desire is burnt by God's light, there is no likelihood of any desire arising in the mind, because the aspirant is fully imbued with divine grace which transforms him. It is said that even if the desires are forcibly driven away from the mind by will power, they take refuge in our physical being. They are ejected from there also when the light of God enters it. Then only we become absolutely pure in thought, word and deed. This is the absolute purity which we attain through the grace of God. Whatever discipline we undergo is done by God's will alone and not by our will or initiative.

Abbot: This agrees totally with what we believe. I would like to ask another question. If a man makes a serious effort to purify himself, he will take a long time to attain purification?

Ramdas. Not only that. If he struggles to discipline himself to attain purification by his own will, without invoking divine grace to help him, his struggle will be in vain, however long it may be. In the ultimate state, when God's grace fully illumines him, he lives always in the presence of God and no

unholy thought can ever enter his mind He remains absolutely pure in all conditions of external life, as innocent as a child, without any sex-thought. He is free from all desires He has now attained permanent purity Thereafter, Ramdas can say, he has no need to practise any discipline to maintain his purity For, purity becomes natural to him God-thought gets stamped on his mind By continuous remembrance of God the Divine Light becomes permanent with him This removes from his mind all darkness and the desires born of it

HOW TO AVERT FALLS

Abbot Does that mean that after man has reached a certain stage he is liable to fall again? In the Christian doctrine it is said there is always a danger of one forgetting grace and glorifying the ego

Ramdas Ramdas anticipated this question When once you have surrendered yourself to God and by His grace you have become entirely His, you feel secure under His protection and He assures you that He will never allow you to fall God in all His mercy will guard you at every turn of your life If there are temptations He will see that you do not fall into them. His protective power is so great that there is no likelihood of a fall if you have really handed yourself over to Him and made Him your all in all,—your sole refuge. God takes care of you as a mother does the child

Abbot Are there any cases where saints have fallen permanently, or fallen for some time and risen again? We have known of Christian saints who have fallen

Ramdas Saints are God-realised persons and as such they can have no fall But those who have only reached a certain stage and who have not completely surrendered to His will are likely to fall This does not mean that God withdraws His grace from such a person, but the latter withdraws himself from His Grace Grace is ever pouring on all of us, but we are not conscious of it We must be fully conscious of Grace Sometimes we are conscious and receive it, but at other times certain conditions prevent us from accepting the Grace, and as a result we fall

Abbot Do you know in India of those who had gone up to a certain level and then fallen?

Ramdas: There are some cases that Ramdas knows of

J H · Father feels that both of you are very near together He read your book 'In Quest of God' which I had sent him. He feels that what you have written in it about Ramnam is similar to their formula of the Father in Heaven, Holy Ghost and Son Would you like to ask Father some questions? Perhaps he thinks you would like to ask something

Ramdas Ramdas has come here to have his Darshan and by that he is supremely happy, to see his dear loving face full of light and peace He feels blessed by having come here What more can he ask?

Abbot I can say the same thing about you Would you like to have a look round the Monastery?

J H. Many young men who have read Swami Vivekanand's and your books have gone back with more faith to their own religion (Christianity) Father says he is pleased to hear that I say that you are more pleased

NOT DOGMA BUT EXPERIENCE

Father Coneus What you say of Grace and of power etc. is a sort of dogma Is it not?

Ramdas If we are in a dark room of which all the windows have been closed and suddenly you open them, then light gets in Similarly, if you open the windows of your heart, you get a flood of light within you This is the way how we get Grace This is not a dogma This is the actual experience of those who have tried to have Grace Grace is available to all, but they have to *open the windows of their heart, just as* Sun's light is open to one and all, but they have to open their eyes to see it.

J H . Father Coneus says that we may call it a "dogma of Grace". The dogma is. 'If you open the window, Grace will pour in '

Ramdas You may call it anything but let us make the best use of the light that we get by opening the windows That is all that we are concerned with

GRACE BETTER EXPERIENCED THAN EXPLAINED

F C · It is mentioned in the 'Imitation of Christ' that it is better to feel Grace than to know and discuss about it. In this part of the world, we think first and feel only next

Ramdas We must feel more than we speculate

F C Perhaps you do think of light when you are not actually conscious of it

Ramdas As Sri Ramakrishna says, you have come to a garden full of fruit trees, as you wanted to eat fruits But you forget about it and are counting the number of leaves on each tree and so on Another man comes, directly climbs up the tree, plucks fine fruits and eats them, without speculating about them

F.C That is greater wisdom Very often we have to believe things before we see, for example, God

Ramdas We believe in the words of saints, and after belief only, real experience comes

F C We read the lives of saints, quite a lot

Ramdas That is very elevating It is just like coming in contact with them That is the beginning, so that we can get live contact of the saints later

UNIQUENESS OF HINDUISM

J H I told Father that the one thing the Hindus do not like is the Roman Catholics' method of conversion

F C Don't Hindus convert?

Ramdas No Hindus do not convert They may sometimes recover those who were forcibly converted If one thinks one can advance on the spiritual path and attain salvation by following the path of Christianity, one is welcome to do so But in many cases of conversion, so-called, Hindus are tempted to embrace Christianity for some material gains There is a cousin of Ramdas' who has become a Christian We are very close friends and we continue to be so He believed in Christianity and then changed faith We have nothing to say against him He comes to our Ashram also

F C Does it mean that the Hindu religion aims merely at seeking God?

Ramdas Yes We honour all the great Saints and Teachers of the world It is the most liberal religion,—never sectarian We have in the Ashram a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ Ramdas has derived so much inspiration from Jesus and had also His Vision in a cave on the Himalayas He saw Him in a form full of radiance He must Himself dwell in us and inspire

us to lead a holy life This is most important.

F.C.: Kindly pray for us also.

Ramdas: When God is within you, to whom is Ramdas to pray?

F C We have not yet reached your level and there is always the chance of a fall again.

Ramdas. We were very happy to be here You were very very kind to us Thank you very much

A GREAT DAY

J H Swamiji, to-day is a very great day for me, as I have been very anxious to bring a great saint from India in contact with a real Christian in Europe,– I mean a *real* Christian That is fulfilled to-day. Don't you like the Abbot?

Ramdas: Ramdas is very happy to have met him He is a very fine soul. His face shines bright There is peace in the very atmosphere of the Monastery

J H I am very happy

GENEVA,
31st August 1954

MANTRAS AND THEIR EFFECT

Q I have heard that certain words in Sanskrit have a bearing on the nervous system Can you tell me, therefore, which Name is best suited?

Ramdas Ramdas feels that it does not depend upon the rhythm or sound of any particular name so much as on the love and devotion with which you utter the Name of God You may repeat any Name of God But you must be aware that that Name stands for God, and you must repeat or chant it with all love and devotion This is what really counts

Sounds by themselves have some influence on our physical and mental system But love has a greater influence than the sound on the mind, heart and body If you repeat the Name of God with all love, your physical, mental and intellectual faculties will be perfectly harmonised in tune with the Divine in you Everything depends upon the power that you infuse into the Name when you utter it If you infuse all the love and devotion that you have in your heart, it's effect on your mind will be immediate For example, when we talk words full of love, we see that they have the power to give solace to others, whereas if you charge words with hate and utter them, they can even kill others A word from a saint, uttered with love, will go straight into the heart of a person, destroy the ignorance in him, and awaken in him at once the consciousness of God, while a word of insult from a person may make another so miserable that he may even commit suicide

So it is the power that we infuse into the word that produces effect When we repeat the Name of God with all devotion, or even hear it repeated so by others, our mind becomes free from sorrows, worries and anxieties, and we shall be perfectly calm, serene and blissful

LOVE FOR LOVE'S SAKE

Q We take some people to be atheists We feel they are going to suffer Is there anything that we can do to help them?

Ramdas We can help them by loving them in spite of their being atheists By such love we can convert them and make them believe in God We must not discard them because they are atheists We must love them with all our heart, instead of being intolerant of them If we find fault with them and condemn them, we are making things worse for them It is by love that saints change the hearts of people who happen to go to them and who have no faith in God In spite of their non-belief in God, saints love them and treat them with kindness When such non-believers see what it is to have faith in God, they at once change and start loving everybody They find, that the saints love them in spite of all their weaknesses This causes their hearts to melt and as a result they get faith and become believers in God We must give them love for love's sake Then only it produces the desired effect If we put ourselves in a position of superiority over them, the free flow of love from our heart is obstructed Saints see divinity in them and so awaken divinity in their hearts

Q When we love some people, should it be with the desire that they should change or should it be without any desire at all?

Ramdas We must love them for love's sake Such love produces the desired effect also

Q Does not the desire, however well meant, that people should change, amount to criticism?

Ramdas: If we put ourselves in a superior position, that obstructs the free flow of our love towards them You simply love them with all your heart, then they are sure to change without the need of your desiring them to change

JNANI'S INTEREST IN THE WORLD

Q Can a man who has reached knowledge through Jnana Yoga solve mathematical problems, or play on musical instruments which he had not used before?

Ramdas: When one has attained the knowledge of the Reality, he is absorbed in the consciousness of his real Self and witnesses all the activities of the universe, his body, mind, intellect and the senses dispassionately He will be an instrument in the hands of God for disseminating joy and peace to everybody so that they can be awakened to the consciousness

of that Self That Self alone is real Whatever you learn by investigating the activities on the material plane is of no importance to you after attaining the Atman, because they are all changing and impermanent What you have mathematically proved to be true to-day may be wrong some other time What science tells us to-day might prove different at some other time There are many changes going on in this changing universe So the man of knowledge does not think it worth-while that he should spend his time on such things, whereas he can utilise that time for awakening people to the consciousness of the real Self which will bring them everlasting happiness

NATURE HELPS REALISED SOULS

Q Does ultimate realisation come in the form of the motherly attitude in Nature including the consciousness of the Christ principle?

Ramdas It is true, when you have realised God and have found Him in your own heart, the whole world will be friendly to you, all the forces in Nature will also be helping you in any mission that you have undertaken This is perhaps what you mean Mother Nature becomes very very kind and helpful to you because the Christ principle and the power that is active in the manifestation of Nature are not different

WAY TO PEACE

Q Is it owing to the restlessness of our mind that sometimes we feel we have devotion for God and at other times not?

Ramdas When the mind is restless we do not feel love for God When the mind is calm and serene, we feel that we have devotion for God When we associate with people of restless minds, our mind also gets restless If we associate with people who are habitually peaceful through constant remembrance of God, our mind too becomes peaceful So it is said that we should associate ourselves with pure souls who are on the godward path as by such association we will be able to keep our mind calm and serene for longer and longer periods until we are established in the eternal peace When we do not associate with such souls it is better that we keep a stream of God-remembrance in our mind so that we can always maintain tranquillity and peace in the heart

NO RESTRICTIONS IN JAPA

Q How can one reconcile the profane and the sacred? Can one go on repeating the Name of God wherever one is, even when in the toilet?

Ramdas There is no harm in repeating the Name at all times and in all places Even when you are in the toilet you can go on repeating the Name For, bodily impurity is not a thing that is detached from us at any time. There are also many impurities in our mind which we cannot remove and which are always with us even when we do not go to the toilet room If we examine our body also we shall find so much dirt within it that, if we are to rigidly follow the rule relating to purity, there will be no possibility of our doing Japa It is not by going to the toilet that we are in an unclean amosphere, but always there is so much of uncleanliness within us We have to purify our mind and it is only in that way we can realise the truth within us We can rub and scrub the body any number of times, make it clean, and then sit in a clean room But that does not help in realising God Only if we mentally become pure, God reveals Himself in our hearts

DIVINISE ALL ACTIONS

Q Does Swamiji advocate that we should rid our mind of all intellectual activity in order to reach God or can artistic work help us?

Ramdas Artistic work done as a dedication to God will be of great help If it is done in order to gain name and fame, it will be an obstacle This is true of all actions that we do Therefore, action must be done with a view to realising God It is not by rejection of action that we get Him, but by divinisation of action Then our work becomes worship and in that work we get real joy.

DEVOTEE CAN EVEN REBUKE GOD

Q. There was a Catholic saint who rebuked God whenever he was led to do something bad, and put the whole blame on Him

Ramdas That shows how great his love was for God and his dependence on Him In the first place, he realises that there is a God who can protect us With this assurance he

rebukes Him 'O God, why did You not make me act in the right way? Why did You allow me to walk on the wrong path?' You remember how Ramdas once rebuked God for having made him take food in a house when a hungry man was waiting outside When Ramdas came out and saw the hungry man, he bitterly wept and took God to task as to why He had permitted Ramdas to take food in such circumstances If he had been rightly guided by Him, Ramdas would have given all the food to the hungry man This attitude of Ramdas towards God does not mean that he was lacking in faith It was out of pure devotion and absolute dependence on Him that he found fault with Him God took it well He did not get angry He consoled Ramdas and took him to some devotee who by singing His name pacified his mind [The incident is narrated in the book "In the Vision of God"]

MIRACLES BY SAINTS

Q In a letter which I received this morning a friend has asked me to put a question to you about the miracles performed by Jesus Are they real?

Ramdas Ramdas takes them to be real It is also quite possible to perform such miracles by the power and will of God Actually, these are miracles only to those who look at the physical side of things, but those who live in the realm of the Spirit take them as natural occurrences It is quite natural that divine power is used in mysterious ways either to cure physical diseases or to awaken people to the consciousness of God By mere touch or sight they are able to heal the distempers with which people are afflicted Such things have been done by saints spontaneously, without their consciously willing it

As an example, in the life of Jesus, the woman, who was suffering from a bad disease, by simply touching the robe of Jesus got herself healed Jesus did not do this consciously, but the woman drew the power from him Inadvertently a saint may touch somebody who has some disease and he may be cured of it, because when a saint touches another person, a divine power flows out of him and those who have faith are benefited by that power, whether on the physical or on the mental plane The greatest disease in man is ignorance If

he is cured of it, he is cured of all diseases, once for all He will then see the light of God within him and will be liberated for ever from the thraldom of desires which has been the cause of his bondage and misery

A STORY

In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story how miracles are worked by God's grace There was once a king in India One of his many servants received the grace of God, with the result that his mind was turned towards God After devoting himself to God for some time he found he could no longer work under the king So he gave up his job and went to the Himalayas for performing austerities Some years later, he realised God and came down to the plains to work for the benefit of humanity,—what in Sanskrit is called 'Loka Sangraha'

In that connection, he desired to perform a great Yajna or sacrifice Sacrifices are done in India by offering oblations to God through fire for gaining particular ends In this case the end was the securing of plenty and prosperity for humanity The saint invited donations for this great work from various princes and other rich people whom he knew He was very popular already So large donations poured in He had sent his appeal also to the king under whom he was serving years before Though the king did not make out from whom he had received the appeal, he too sent a decent amount as his contribution for the sacrifice When the day for the sacrifice came, all the donors came and attended the function The Yajna was performed on a very large scale and many people were present, among whom this king was also one The king could not recognise the Yogi, because he had left him many years before, and was now completely changed in appearance

After the whole function was over, when the guests were about to take leave of the Yogi, they went to him one by one The king also went to him and, kneeling before him, said 'O Lord, I hear you possess great miraculous powers Would you be kind enough to show me a miracle?'

The Yogi replied 'The miracle has already been performed'

'How'? asked the king, with a surprise "I have not seen any miracle here"

Then the Yogi smilingly said 'Need I say I was your servant

some years ago? Whenever you beckoned me, I used to run to you and bend before you to receive orders Now I am sitting like a king and you are standing and kneeling before me Can there be a greater miracle than this?'

SAINT'S HEALING TOUCH

Q Some people in India tell me that they feel sorry for Jesus because he had to perform such miracles and it must have been rather painful for him

Ramdas That is not the opinion of all Indians, or of all Indian sages The saint's heart is so compassionate that he cannot bear to see any suffering When he sees, he brings relief by touch or by wishing that the person who suffers be cured Such instances are many That friend who made the remark about Jesus may himself, when he is in trouble, go to a saint for blessings and thus try to get his troubles removed If his child is suffering from a serious illness he may take the child to a Saint for blessings for a cure Very often, the touch of the saint cures persons of even incurable diseases Ramdas knows it from personal experience In his own life there were so many instances of people suffering from some bad diseases, coming to him with all faith and touching his feet and being miraculously cured It is a wonderful thing Ramdas at that time could not make out how it happened When they extolled him for this he only said it was not Ramdas' power, but Ram's power that worked in them and produced this result

God can heal a person physically, mentally and in every way His power acts through us when we surrender ourselves to Him. Therefore there cannot be anything wrong when a saint uses his spiritual power, not to get some name and fame in the world, but for the benefit of others In fact, saints cheerfully suffer for the good of humanity There are Siddhis or occult powers which some people show to the world in order to gain name, fame and wealth This is wrong Jesus never used his spiritual powers for gaining anything for himself Whatever he did was a spontaneous expression of his love and compassion for those who were suffering So there was nothing wrong in what Jesus did The remark of that friend, therefore, does not seem to be proper

NO REASON TO DISBELIEVE THE GOSPEL

Q. Has Jesus produced all the wonders described in the Evangel?

Ramdas Ramdas for one entirely believes that Jesus had produced all the wonders described in the Evangel or the Gospel

Q Are there proofs of this? Because, in a book written by D F Straus, "The Life of Jesus" published in Germany, it is said that nearly everything that is written in the Evangel, especially the wonders, is only imagination

Ramdas There are enough proofs in the lives of great saints and sages of the world. We have read in their lives that they also produced similar wonders or miracles Therefore there is no reason for us to disbelieve that miracles were worked by those great souls, and that they are not possible of being performed Ramdas does not agree with the author of the book you have mentioned

Q Was Jesus an adept or not? If not, who was he?

Ramdas Ramdas does not know the exact meaning of the word 'adept' But, whatever it be, Jesus was an incarnation of God He was not merely an 'adept', but a perfect manifestation of Divinity

Q Are there now on the earth adepts living? If so, where?

Ramdas So far as Ramdas' knowledge goes, he can say that there are great souls who have realised God, in several parts of India, in Europe, in America and also in several other parts of the world But Ramdas has to say that merely going, seeing and testing is not the way to make out whether they have actually realised God or not, because Jesus and so many other saints in their own times, were not believed as men of God by a vast majority of mankind So it is not from the opinion formed by the populace that you have to decide about the greatness of illumined souls, but by your own intuitional experience that you get in their presence

RETAIN HOLY MEMORIES

Q How are we to treat the memories of the past? Should we try to discard them as much as possible without distinction, or should we retain and use whatever is helpful in them? For instance, after you have left us, how should we think of your

stay here? Should we forget all about it, or should we derive the benefit we can from recollections of it?

Ramdas So long as we cannot get away from remembering the past, it is better to remember whatever is helpful or inspiring When we transcend the mind, we give up thinking of the past altogether This visit of Ramdas may also be forgotten when you have found the truth within yourself and everywhere without. Then there is no question of remembering what was experienced in the past, because you have transcended time Past, present and future have nothing to do with you Past memories, whether they are good or bad, are wiped out But till that stage is reached, memories of some holy associations will be very helpful and should be retained Memories of such things as cause disturbance in your mind and obstruct your progress towards a higher life should be discarded

SUICIDE TAKES ONE DOWNWARD

Q What is the consequence of suicide for a human being?

Ramdas· If we look at this act from all aspects, we feel it is most undesirable It is condemned by all saints, sages and prophets, because the act itself condemns the person to a lower grade of life Man's object is to evolve higher and higher, until he unites with God, but suicide takes him downward and involves him more and more in the lower nature So it should be entirely avoided and even a thought of it should be banished from the mind According to Hindu beliefs, such acts make one take birth in the lowest kind of animal life That goes to show not only that one's progress is retarded, but also that one descends to a degraded life Therefore suicide is a thing which should not be resorted to by anybody in any circumstances There is no justification for self-killing

Q· A man commits suicide Is it due to his Karma or to his free will?

Ramdas It is free will that is working, and not Karma

Q Are there not degrees in the consequences?

Ramdas Whatever it is, when one kills oneself his condition after death will be very bad

Q If somebody has attempted to commit suicide, but later on gives up the idea, has the attempt an evil effect on him later?

Ramdas No God forgives him

PRACTISE CEASELESS REMEMBRANCE

Q How can we continue Japa while we are engaged in intellectual work which requires high concentration of mind?

Ramdas When you are engaged in intellectual work, you need not do Japa Do it at all other times

Q But, is there not a stage when Japa continues unconsciously?

Ramdas There is a stage when remembrance of God goes on continuously even when you are active in the world intellectually or physically But that state can be attained only after a long practice of Japa When you engage yourself in Japa during spare hours, you gradually tune your mind with God and an undercurrent of Japa which means God-remembrance, goes on even when you are active in the world

In different communities, you will find specified times fixed for meditation, worship or prayer Among Christians, Sundays are devoted for prayers There are also daily prayers conducted in the mornings and evenings and at bed-time Among the Hindus, there are three periods—the three Sandhyas—prescribed for prayers everyday Among the Muslims there are five These timings are fixed so that the aspirants can regularly engage their minds at these hours in remembering God and by so doing, get strength to remember Him also at all other times Generally, it is not possible to devote all the time for thinking of God even if we have that much of time at our disposal So, work and worship are done at separate hours until all work becomes worship and all worship becomes work

Q Can we get to that stage by adopting the attitude that everything we do,—whether it be typing, accounting or any manual work,—is done by the Divine?

Ramdas We can have this attitude only when we have developed a conscious remembrance of God in our mind always Otherwise we may make the mistake of thinking that God makes us do wrong We must not be led into this error It is better that we do everything as far as possible in the right way, without inflicting any harm upon another and without keeping our mind in a state of turmoil, restlessness and impurity. But whenever we make a mistake, we can repent and offer to God our prayers and ask Him to see that we do not do such things again and to make us remember Him constantly

If we have constant remembrance of God we are incapable of doing anything wrong It takes long before we can be always conscious of God and feel truly from the core of our heart that it is He who is guiding us from within in all things that we do In that state we have surrendered ourselves entirely to God and our ego-sense is totally absent We have become divine instruments, divine workers We know that we and He are one

Q For the purpose of spiritual progress, is it better to remain within the framework of an established religion, or should we try to get out of it in order to make research in perfect freedom, without anything to bind us?

Ramdas Certain rules and regulations are imposed on us in order to enable us to progress towards God, without allowing the mind to go astray. These are necessary, provided by observing them, we make progress on the path But our ultimate aim is to liberate ourselves from all narrow cells of religion, nationality, sect, creed and country, and by transcending them reach the vastness of the universal vision Then we go beyond all barriers that separate us from one another and feel one with all beings Then we accept all religions as true Our outlook becomes universal

USE OF OCCULT POWERS

Q If a person has reached knowledge and developed his spirituality, can he utilise his occult powers to work what you call wonders, which Jesus has produced as described in the Evangel?

Ramdas Those who have reached spiritual perfection can utilise their powers without being in any way affected or harmed thereby But if those who are still on the spiritual path utilise the powers which they may get in the course of their disciplines, it will not only retard their progress but also be the cause of their downfall Jesus was a spiritually perfect person So, when he utilised the powers, he did so purely for the benefit of the people who came in contact with him He had no other motive When people who have not reached the state of God-realisation use such powers, they are obsessed with pride, and consequently fall

LIMITED VALUE OF BOOKS

Q Are there any books from which one can obtain occult

and spiritual knowledge and perfection?

Ramdas Books do not help us much in our spiritual progress Books teach us the way which we have to follow and by following which alone we reach the goal By merely reading them we cannot reach the goal In all religions of the world *there are some principal books which guide us on the spiritual* path In Hinduism we have the Bhagavad Gita and other Vedantic scriptures In Christianity there is the Bible, in Islam, the Koran, in Buddhism, the Dhammapada or teachings of Buddha, and in Zoroastrianism, the Zend Avesta But for reaching the goal it is not enough to read these books We must practise prayer, worship and meditation, as laid down in these scriptures, ending in complete surrender to the will of God, so that we can ultimately merge our little self into His Cosmic Personality

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Q Has the Theosophical Society any positive value? Are the instructions given by the Society of any real value? Again. what is your opinion about Madame Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Leadbeater, Sinnett, etc ?

Ramdas: The Theosophical Society was formed by its founders in order essentially to disseminate the religious literature of different faiths It is a Society and not a religion It has published original works and translations pertaining to various religions prevailing in the world So far as this work of the Society is concerned, it has done immense good to humanity As regards the last part of the question, Ramdas has read some of their books and they have proved to be very inspiring to him

Q If I reach supreme realisation, will there be any change in the world? Will human misery be less than before? Will social problems be solved and will there be greater brotherhood among men? Or, will I not have taken refuge under egoism?

Ramdas If there is egoism, none of those things will be possible

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih !